

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. POLICY	1
Intent and Definition of Crisis Management	1
School Board Policy Statement	1
II. JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN	5
Overview and Rationale	5
Central Office Crisis Planning and Response Team	7
Annual Start-Up Procedures for All Schools	12
III. COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN	13
Crisis Response Team	13
Crisis Response Procedures	19
Medical Protocols	38
IV. CRITICAL INCIDENT/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	39
Overview	39
Identifying and Responding to Imminent Warning Signs	39
School Threat Assessment Response Protocol	41
Suggested Procedures for Handling Fights in School Settings	43
Lockdown Procedure Commonwealth High School	44
Hostage Situations/Barricaded Captor	46
Tornado/Severe Weather	51
Fire Procedures	55
Emergency Shelters	57
V. INTERVENTION WITH STUDENTS WHO MAY BE SUICIDAL OR REPRESENT A POTENTIAL THREAT TO OTHERS ...	60
Students Who May Be Suicidal	60
Students Who May Represent a Potential Threat to Others	65
VI. COMMUNICATIONS	69
Overview	69
School Communication	70
Communications with Parents and the Community	75
Communications with Media	76
VII. QUICK GUIDE TO MANAGING CRISES	82
VIII. EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS	128
IX. SCHOOL BUILDING AND VICINITY MAPS	131
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Sample Statements and Communications	A - 1
Appendix B: Planning Surveys and Checklists	B - 1
Appendix C: Training and Drills to Maintain Preparedness	C - 1
Appendix D: Informational Handouts	D - 1
Appendix E: Resources	E - 1
Appendix F: Forms	F - 1

I. POLICY

Intent and Definition of Crisis Management

Intent - Crisis Management is a central component of comprehensive **School Safety**. The most important consideration in both Crisis Management and Safe Schools efforts is the **health, safety and welfare** of the students and staff. A comprehensive Safe Schools Plan places a strong emphasis on prevention using strategies which range from building design to discipline policies and programs which improve school climate.

Definition - Crisis Management is that part of a school division's approach to school safety which focuses more narrowly on a time-limited, problem-focused intervention to identify, confront and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support appropriate adaptive responses.

School Board Policy Statement

The Commonwealth High School Crisis Management Plan operates within the framework of the Jefferson County School Board policy.

Crisis Management Planning

A. Definitions

1. "Crises" shall include but not be limited to situations involving the death of a student, staff member, or a member of a student's immediate family by suicide, substance abuse, illness, or accident. The principals shall have the authority to determine what is a crisis incident and to convene the Crisis Management Team.
2. "Critical incidents" shall include situations involving threats of harm to students, personnel, or facilities. Critical incidents include but are not limited to natural disasters, fire, use of weapons/explosives, and the taking of hostages. Such incidents require an interagency response involving law enforcement and/or emergency services agencies.

3. The individual school “Crisis Management Plan” shall be a written plan with explicit intent to protect and sustain life, reduce emotional trauma, assist in emotional recovery from trauma, and minimize personal injury and/or damage to the facility.

B. Crisis Management Team

An Individual School Crisis Management Team shall be established at each school to meet the demands of crisis incidents.

1. Membership: The crisis team shall consist of an immediately accessible core group who have the knowledge and skills to act in any emergency and shall include the principal, assistant principal, one or more guidance counselors, nurse/clinic attendant, school psychologist, school social worker, one or more selected teachers, and a person to record events/minutes of meetings. Additionally, the Police Department (school resource officer, D.A.R.E. officer, or other person designated by the Police Chief), Mental Health Services, Fire Department, and County Emergency Rescue Services shall be asked to consult with the school team. A roster of team members will be posted in each school administration office.
2. Purposes: The Crisis Team shall implement and adapt appropriate action from the Crisis Management Plan to address the specific events of the crisis. Roles and responsibilities of team members and consultants will be established in the school’s written Crisis Management Plan.

C. Crisis Management Plan

Each school Crisis Management Plan will include provisions for Pre-planning, Intervention/Response, and Post-emergency activities, including the establishment or designation of the following:

1. Explicit procedures for each crisis incident.
2. Crisis headquarters and command post outside the school facility in the event evacuation is necessary.
3. Chain of command in the event a key administrator is not available.
4. Spokesperson to the media. This person will be the principal or designee and is responsible for gathering and confirming all pertinent information about the incident

and for informing the school division's public information officer prior to any media release. The spokesperson will also designate a media reception area when deemed appropriate.

5. Network of key communicators. It is the responsibility of these key individuals to convey approved information to others. This network may include phone trees to notify staff of emergency incidents and special meetings which may occur before or after school hours, and various counselors designated to support groups such as students, faculty, and parents.
6. Communication plan within the school and to the community. The best means of communication may vary with the crisis. However, the plan must provide for communicating with teachers as soon as possible. When appropriate, well-informed representatives should be ready to go into classrooms. Avoid giving news via assembly or public address systems as results can be unpredictable when giving shocking news to large groups of students. To ensure accuracy and avoid rumor, information to students must come directly from internal memoranda or statements written specifically for that purpose and approved by the principal. News is best given to students in class so they can ask questions of a person they know. Questions from parents should also be addressed from pre-approved fact sheet.
7. Critical Incident Management. Critical incident response will be in accordance with the Memoranda of Understanding executed between the Jefferson County Public Schools and the Departments of Police, of Fire, and of Emergency Services.
8. Arrangement for support services. One individual from the Crisis Management Team will be designated to contact the school board office and to contact, as needed, other community resources such as Mental Health Crisis Services. The school board office will arrange for assistance as needed from additional school psychologists, school social workers, and other guidance counselors and to contact Mental Health Crisis Services. School arrangements should include the designation of meeting spaces, provisions to request on-call services to meet unexpected demand, and provision of long term follow-up.
9. Bring closure to the crisis. This activity will vary depending on the crisis. But it is imperative to recognize officially the end of the crisis and the beginning of the healing process.
10. Evaluation of the crisis plan. Response to each crisis incident will be reviewed and evaluated at the conclusion of each crisis. Crisis Management Team annually will evaluate the plan and its effectiveness and make modifications as needed.

D. Crisis Management Inservice

The Crisis Management Plan shall be reviewed annually with the full school staff and shared with all transient staff, nurse/clinic attendants, secretaries, cafeteria staff, custodians, and bus drivers. Schools are encouraged to provide inservice on specific crisis related topics such as substance abuse code violations, neglect and abuse, and suicide prevention.

Approved by School Board April 6, 1999; effective July 1, 1999.

(This example of a school board policy has been adapted from the Hanover County School Board policy.)

II. JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Overview and Rationale

Overview

Jefferson County Public Schools has developed procedures for dealing with existing and potential student and school crises. The Comprehensive Crisis Management plan includes Intervention Procedures, Crisis Response Procedures, and Critical Incident Procedures. An important component of the Plan is a set of interagency agreements with various county agencies to aid timely communication and help coordinate services between the agencies and individual schools or the entire school division.

Intervention Procedures provide a systematic process for identifying, referring, and assessing students who may be suicidal or represent a potential threat to others. Crisis teams established in each school provide immediate intervention with referred students. Team members have been trained to assess the seriousness of the situation and respond according to specific guidelines. The team gathers information from other sources, chooses a team member to interview the referred student, develops a plan, directs the student and family to appropriate help, appoints a case manager, and provides follow-up. Additionally, schools regularly provide inservice training to faculty and staff about recognizing students in crisis and on referral procedures.

Crisis Response Procedures guide staff in responding to more frequently occurring crises such as deaths of students or teachers and other traumatic events which can affect the school community for days. These procedures are intended to be time-limited, problem-focused interventions designed to identify and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support productive responses. The crisis team uses crisis response procedures to help administrators:

- gather information;
- establish communication with the family;
- disseminate accurate information to faculty and students;
- intervene directly with students most likely to be affected;
- increase the available supportive counseling for students and staff; and
- guide students in helpful ways to remember the deceased.

Critical Incident Procedures help school personnel handle potentially dangerous events such as an armed intruder in a school and other life-threatening events. The school division has developed a Plan which emphasizes a coordinated interagency approach. A Code Blue has been established in all school buildings to provide a uniform method of warning staff and students of high risk situations involving imminent danger to life or limb.

Interagency Agreements

Jefferson County Public Schools has entered into agreements with various county governmental agencies, including mental health, police, and fire departments. The agreements specify the type of communications and services provided by one agency to another. The agreements also make school division personnel available beyond the school setting in the event of a disaster or traumatic event taking place in the community.

Rationale

Jefferson County Public Schools Crisis Management Plan procedures provide benefits for students, parents, and the school division. The procedures provide an organized, systematic method for helping students. Staff members know under what circumstances and how to refer a student for help. Crisis Team members operate within specific guidelines to make collaborative decisions, sharing the responsibility of these often difficult, stressful situations. Parents and other members of the community are assured that the school division has established procedures which provide for needed intervention with troubled students and better prepare schools to respond to crises.

The school division benefits through increased legal protection. Systems that have not established crisis management procedures have been found liable for their absence. While no set of policies rules out the potential for legal problems, establishing guidelines on the best professional practices provides a margin of protection against liability.

The interagency agreements have fostered stronger collaborative relationships and have led to improved communication about students and family events that could impact the schools.

Central Office Crisis Planning and Response Team
Assigned Roles for School Division Staff During a School Emergency

Superintendent

- Direct all operations of the division in the management of the emergency.
- Gather information from all aspects of the emergency for use in making appropriate decisions about the management of the emergency.
- Assess the emergency situation and assign tasks based on the overall needs for managing the emergency.
- Direct all activities of division and school staff in the management of the emergency.
- Stay in contact with the leaders of the emergency service agencies and the law enforcement agencies working with the emergency.
- Authorize the release of information to the public.
- Keep School Board informed of emergency status.
- The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction will assist Superintendent and serve in this capacity in the absence of the Superintendent.

Executive Assistant to Superintendent

- From the division offices, direct all division office staff.
- Establish and maintain lines of communication between the division and the emergency site; for off campus emergency, lines of communication must be established for the involved school, as well. Such lines of communication may also include couriers.
- Manage the professional and non-professional staff from the district office.
- Assign resources (persons and materials) to various sites for specific needs.
- Communicate with other schools in the division during the emergency period.
- Arrange for the delivery of outside services and materials needed for the management of the emergency.

Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

- Establish and implement plan for crisis; form and coordinate crisis teams with Lead Psychologist.
- Maintain active file of helping agencies within the community; the names of contact person will be included.
- Maintain active file of community persons, such as counselors, doctors, psychologists, ministers; information regarding services and follow-up services will be included.
- Create letters to notify parents of continuing care that is available to students; available care will include local and state agencies, as well as school-based care.
- Develop information sheet for parents, teachers, and others; information will include topics such as talking with students, signs of depression, and others relating to crisis stress.
- Develop schedule for activities for the first day of school following the crisis with support services.
- Maintain follow-up activities such as referrals for help outside the school services setting.
- Report immediately to the local hospital if students or adults are being sent to that hospital for treatment. If more than one hospital is admitting students or adults, coordinate communication among those hospitals and the division. Assign and direct other division staff to assist in those hospitals.
- Coordinate communication between the hospital and the division office.
- Meet and talk with the parents of students and spouses of adults who have been admitted to the hospital.

Assistant Superintendent, Administration

- Develop plan and scenarios in which division technological resources can be dispersed effectively to emergency sites.
- Handle overflow telephone calls at the emergency site.
- Make recommendations regarding the restarting of school activities from support services.
- Serve as a liaison between the emergency school site and the emergency support teams that may be needed.
- Coordinate and direct communication between the emergency site and county and state agencies.
- Obtain and direct the placement of generators when power must be restored for a temporary period.
- Coordinate and direct the acquisition of water when there is a disruption of water and sewer services.
- Coordinate and direct contact with emergency medical services, local police and sheriff's departments, fire departments, and the highway patrol.
- Coordinate and direct search-and-rescue operations when needed.
- Supervise the use of the school computer system for communication with the district office and electronic bulletin board system.
- As needed, report various sites involved in the communication system if there are problems in that system.
- Provide technical support for all communications hardware and software.

Assistant Superintendent, Finance

- Plan and initiate arrangements for food for building personnel.
- Notify risk management of emergency.
- Coordinate with director of transportation as needed.
- Arrange for the payment of monies needed to respond to emergency situations; authorize purchases and payments for such resources.

Director of Community Relations

- Collect and disseminate information to the media. Be aware of deadlines, the need for information accuracy, and other issues related to the media and the performance of their jobs.
- Plan and coordinate press interviews to help the news media meet deadlines.
- Create and disseminate press releases.
- Respond to rumors through the dissemination of accurate information.
- Organize a network of key people (police, fire, health) within the community through which accurate information can be disseminated.
- Be aware of the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and provide all appropriate information based on those requirements.
- Plan and coordinate the use of the Division's cable television channel for live and taped presentations. Press conferences can go out live; updates for the public can be taped and aired as needed.
- Coordinate information to be shared with school and division personnel during and after the crisis.
- Act as a liaison between the media and division personnel whose attention must be focused on the immediate problems of managing the crisis without constant interruption.
- Arrange interviews for the media with key school and division staff who are involved in the emergency or who act as spokespersons for the division.
- Establish and maintain a clearinghouse for calls and requests from schools, the community, parents, and the media and refer those to the appropriate person or place.

Principals

School Crisis

- Be familiar with central office support available to principals.
- Make school crisis plan, crisis management handbook, and emergency management kit readily available to appropriate staff.

Division Crisis

- Remain at respective schools until the end of the school day.
- When all students and staff members have left campus for the day, be prepared to report to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.
- Perform tasks assigned by the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

Annual Start-Up Procedures for All Schools

Annual Start-Up Procedures

1. Confirm membership of the crisis team.
2. Send a list of team members to the Community Relations Office.
3. Decide on a coordinator and substitute for synchronizing suicide intervention, critical incident, and postvention procedures.
4. Plan at least two crisis team meetings. It is mandatory that crisis teams meet prior to the beginning of the school year and one other time during the school year to review procedures, especially critical incidents, and check equipment such as crisis boxes.
5. Inform faculty of crisis members. Print intervention, crisis response and critical incident procedures in the faculty handbook.
6. Review critical incident communication codes with faculty and staff.
7. Update faculty phone tree.
8. The team needs to not only review procedures annually, but should go through at least two scenarios using the Postvention Steps form. **The key to successfully handling an incident is the preparation before the event.**
9. Meet with new staff members annually to inform them of intervention, crisis response critical incident procedures, emphasizing the referral process for crisis intervention.
10. Hold a general faculty/staff inservice on intervention, crisis response and critical incident procedures every several years.

(This example is an adaptation based on Chesterfield County Public Schools Crisis Management Plan.)

III. COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Crisis Response Team

Responsibilities

The Commonwealth High School Crisis Response Team, under leadership of the principal, is responsible for the following:

1. Establishing a protocol for dealing with crises and critical incidents.
2. Establishing a systematic approach for identifying, referring, and intervening with students identified as at-risk for suicide or other destructive behaviors.
3. Orienting staff to procedures and training to fulfill designated roles, including conducting drills.
4. Providing information to students, staff, and community on Crisis Management referral procedures.
5. Providing assistance during a crisis in accordance with designated roles; providing follow-up activities.
6. Conducting debriefing at the conclusion of each crisis episode to critique the effectiveness of the building's Crisis Management Plan.
7. Conducting periodic reviews and up-dating of the Crisis Management Plan; conducting related updated staff training.

Duties of Members of Crisis Response Team

Duties of members of the crisis response team are as follows:

- A. The **Principal** will coordinate and supervise emergency management activities at the school. Assignments include:
 1. Continuity of administration.
 2. Development of a comprehensive school emergency management program.

3. Designation and training of a school Crisis Team.
 4. Designation of an Emergency Operations Center or command post (may be changed by responsible county public safety officials.)
 5. Monitor developing situations such as weather conditions or incidents in the community that may impact the school.
 6. Keep county officials, division staff and school personnel informed of developing situations and initiate emergency notifications and warnings.
 7. Direct emergency operations until public safety officials arrive on scene. Serve as a liaison to public safety personnel once they arrive on the scene.
 8. Implement evacuation procedures and measures to control access to affected area.
 9. Authorize the release of information to the public.
 10. Coordinate use of building as public shelter for major emergencies occurring in the county.
 11. Provide damage assessment information to the Superintendent of Schools. In major emergencies, damage assessment information will be forwarded to the Emergency Services Coordinator for determination of local emergency status and request for federal assistance.
 12. Coordinate disaster assistance and recovery.
- B.** The **Crisis Team** is trained in intervention and postvention procedures. Team members include the principal, counselor, teachers, school nurse and school social worker – assign the appropriate staff. The Team has responsibility to:
1. Develop and implement procedures for prevention, intervention and postvention at all grade levels.
 2. Establish a systematic approach to identifying, referring and assessing students at risk of suicide or other behavior that would endanger themselves or others.
 3. Disseminate information to students, staff and community on referral procedures.
 4. Provide training for teachers and staff. Conduct drills.
 5. Assist the Principal in controlling emergency situations.

C. **Teachers** are responsible for implementing appropriate procedures to protect students. These responsibilities include:

1. Evacuation – Prepare classroom emergency kit. Direct and supervise students en route to pre-designated safe areas within the school or to an off-site evacuation shelter.
2. Student assembly – Maintain order while in student assembly areas.
3. Student accounting – Verify the location and status of every student. Report to the principal or designee on the condition of any student that needs additional assistance.
4. Establish a partner system to pair teachers and classes so that some teachers can assist with other tasks such as first aid, search and rescue, or community relations.
5. Remain with assigned students throughout the duration of the emergency, unless otherwise assigned through a partner system or until every student has been released through the official “student release process.”

D. **Public Information Officer (PIO)** – The school staff will release information to the parents and to the general public only through a designated PIO. This may be the Superintendent of Schools, principal or other designated individual. Duties include:

1. Identify a potential “news center” site away from emergency operations where media representatives can receive briefings.
2. Prepare public information kit including identification, maps, supplies, signs, forms, sample news releases, battery-powered radio, school information, etc.
3. Collect, verify and disseminate information to the media. Coordinate information with on-site command and the administration PIO prior to release. In cooperation with local public safety officials, considers establishing a Joint Information Center “JIC” to ensure coordination of information being distributed.
4. Establish regular time schedule for news briefings and periodic updates.
5. Provide information in appropriate format for the general public including a format for sensory impaired or non-English speaking persons, if needed.

E. Office Manager (Secretary) – The administrative secretarial staff has primary responsibility for emergency communications including exchange of information with school administration staff, community emergency responders (fire, police, EMS, emergency services coordinator) and internal communication within the school building. Primary responsibility for record keeping also lies with this position.

1. Establish procedures for emergency communications with school administration staff in compliance with school system plans.
2. Establish internal emergency communications including provisions for two-way communications with classrooms and with classes on the playground or other sites.
3. In an emergency, establish and maintain communications with school administration.
4. Establish and maintain communications with county emergency services coordinator, as needed in major emergencies.
5. Initiate and maintain incident log.
6. Receive and maintain student accounting forms. Take appropriate action to notify medical or search teams through 9-1-1.
7. Report status of school and students to school administration as specified.

F. Assistant Principal – All tasks related to student accounting and student release.

1. Establish procedures for assessing and reporting status of students in an emergency or any event that results in evacuation or relocation of students.
2. Provide instruction and practice to all teachers and staff in the student assessment and reporting process.
3. Place reporting forms and procedures in classroom “emergency kit.” Establish procedures for communicating with teachers.
4. In an emergency, receive reports from all teachers on the condition and location of every student.
5. Assign persons to investigate reports of any students missing, injured or ill, or otherwise not in compliance with student accounting reports.
6. Implement student release procedures.

G. Maintenance Head – Maintenance staff are familiar with the operations and infrastructure of the school building and are responsible for the stabilization of the building, controlling access, and securing the school facilities.

1. Inventory all hazardous materials, portable and fixed equipment, and utility lines in or near the school.
2. Establish procedures for isolating hazardous areas.
3. In an emergency, survey damage and structural stability of buildings and utilities and report to the principal.
4. Search the affected sections of the school for students or staff that may be confined or injured; however, do not put yourself or others at risk. This task may need to be accomplished by trained public safety professionals.
5. Implement building access control measures.
6. Secure student assembly areas.
7. Distribute supplies to student assembly areas.
8. Assist county officials in damage assessment.
9. Assist administrators in recovery procedures.

H. Librarian and staff, including volunteers, have responsibility for coordinating logistics (personnel and supplies). Duties include:

1. Pre-determine skills of staff, school volunteers, and interested parents or neighbors.
2. Establish record keeping and inventory systems.
3. Distribute supplies.
4. Register and assign adult and student volunteers.
5. Coordinate information about volunteers and donations with Public Information Officer.

(This example is an adaptation based on the Roanoke City Public Schools Safe Schools Plan.)

**COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS TEAM
1999-2000**

Position/Name	Work Phone	Home Phone	Cell Phone/Beeper
Principal	_____	_____	_____
*Ass't Principal	_____	_____	_____
*Ass't Principal/ Team Coordinator	_____	_____	_____
*Guidance Director	_____	_____	_____
School Nurse	_____	_____	_____
School Resource Officer	_____	_____	_____
School Psychologist	_____	_____	_____
School Social Worker	_____	_____	_____
Secretary	_____	_____	_____
Teacher/Administrator/ Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Teacher/Administrator/ Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Custodian/ Maintenance	_____	_____	_____

* Designated back-up person(s) in the absence of the Principal and Team Coordinator

Crisis Response Procedures

Intent

Crisis Response Procedures are intended to guide staff in responding to more frequently occurring crises such as deaths of students or teachers and other traumatic events which can affect the school community for days. These procedures are intended to be time-limited, problem-focused interventions designed to identify and resolve the crisis, restore equilibrium, and support productive responses.

Procedures for General Crisis Intervention

Source: Association of California School Administrators

Unanticipated events, such as suicides, school bus crashes, natural disasters, or multiple injuries or deaths, can quickly escalate into a schoolwide catastrophe if not dealt with immediately and effectively. Knowing what to do if such a crisis occurs will minimize the chaos, rumors, and the impact of the event on the other students. As a reminder, for the purposes of this manual, crisis is defined as:

A sudden, generally unanticipated event that profoundly and negatively affects a significant segment of the school population and often involves serious injury or death.

The following procedures should be implemented if a schoolwide crisis occurs.

Immediately Following Notification of Crisis

The school administrator or designee should implement the following procedures when the school is notified of a near-death or fatal crisis situation:

Tell the person providing the information not to repeat it elsewhere in the school. Explain the school's need to verify the information and have any announcement of the event come from the designated school administrator. If there is concern regarding the likelihood of compliance with this request, it may be useful to keep the reporting person in the office (or have that person come into the office if he or she called the information) until appropriate steps can be taken.

Tell office staff members NOT to repeat or give out any information within or outside school until specifically instructed to do so. Have them direct all inquiries to the administrator or designee until told otherwise. In schools using student office help, it may be useful to request that only adults answer the school telephone for the remainder of the day.

In case of reporting student death, verify the reported incident by calling the police liaison or coroner. **DO NOT DISTURB THE AFFECTED STUDENT'S FAMILY.**

The timing of the notification of a crisis may alter the order of the initial steps taken. For example, if the school is notified in the morning, all procedures should be implemented on that day with emergency faculty meetings scheduled for lunch and after school. If notification is received at night or on the weekend, ask the person providing the information not to spread the information further until the situation is verified, and proceed with #3. Continue through the remaining general crisis intervention procedures, instructing office staff as appropriate (#2) the following school day.

Following Verification of Crisis

The following actions are listed in a priority order. In actuality, several things will happen simultaneously. It is critical, however, that #1-10 occur **BEFORE THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (#11) IS MADE.**

Once verification of a crisis has occurred, the administrator and/or crisis response team designee(s) must attend to the following:

1. Notify the Superintendent or other appropriate division administrators of the event. Have that person notify the media liaison if appropriate.
2. Convene the Crisis Response Team. Do not unnecessarily alarm others, use the coded message developed for these situations (i.e., "CRT members, please report to room 5," or "A CRT meeting will convene in room 5 in 10 minutes.")
3. Have an administrative assistant or other designee notify the school's social worker, psychologist, and/or counselors. If the affected student was in a special education or other special program, notify the appropriate program coordinator.
4. Assign Crisis Response Team members in the building to locate, gather, and inform closest friends of the deceased/injured and provide support. Pull this group together before the general announcement is made. If significant others are absent or out of the building, assure that a knowledgeable, supportive adult gives the news to them. With parent or guardian consent, have these absent students transported to the school if practical and appropriate.
5. Prepare a formal statement for initial announcement to the entire school. Include minimum details and note that additional information will be forthcoming. Also prepare statements for telephone inquiries.

6. Decide on a time for an emergency staff meeting and notify staff in a manner which does not unnecessarily alarm others. Invite designated outside professionals to join the meeting to help staff members process their own reactions to the situation.
7. Identify students, staff and parents likely to be most affected by the news (e.g., due to their relationship to the deceased/injured, recent or anticipated family losses, personal history with similar crisis, recent confrontations with the affected student). These persons are targeted for additional support.
8. Determine if additional district/community resources are needed — or are needed to “stand by” — to effectively manage the crisis, and notify them if appropriate.
9. Assign team members in the building to:
 - a. Provide grief support for students in designated building areas. Try to have more than one area available for this purpose. Have the adults on duty in these areas keep lists of students they see. Make sure the parents/guardians of these students are notified regarding the impact of the event on their children.
 - b. Review and distribute guidelines to help teachers with classroom discussion.
 - c. Stand in for any substitute teacher in the building or for any staff member unable or unwilling to deal with the situation during the announcement and subsequent discussion.
 - d. Coordinate and greet all auxiliary support services staff members and take them to their assigned locations. Provide a sign-in/out sheet for them.
 - e. Assign a counselor, psychologist, social worker, or other designated staff member to follow a deceased student’s class schedule for the remainder of the day if that will be helpful to teachers in those classes.
10. Station staff/student support members as planned prior to making the announcement.
11. Announce the crisis over the public address system or by delivering a typed statement to every classroom before the end of the period. Include locations of in-building support.

Once the announcement is made, assigned staff members will perform the following:

1. Monitor the students leaving the building without permission. Redirect them to support services. If unable to intercept, notify a family member expressing the school's concerns.
2. Notify parents of students closest to the deceased/injured and ask them to pick up their children at the end of the school day. Implement the plan previously developed to handle masses of parents who will pick up their children.
3. Notify bus drivers — especially those who drive the buses usually traveled in by the injured or deceased student, or who are experiencing the most severe shock.
4. Notify feeder schools regarding siblings or other students predicted to be strongly affected.
5. Collect deceased student's belonging from his/her locker or other sites at the end of the day.
6. Officially withdraw a deceased student from the school attendance rolls.

DESIGNATION OF STAFF ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITY SITES

Assignment	Title/Name	Operations Site(s)
Decision Making/Control	1. Principal _____ 2. Ass't Principal _____	Main Office _____
Crisis Team	1. Coordinator _____ 2. Substitute Coord. _____	_____ _____
Communications/Notification	1. _____ 2. _____	Main Office _____
Evacuation and Sheltering	1. _____ 2. _____	Main Gymnasium/Cafeteria _____
Student Accounting and Release	1. _____ 2. _____	Auditorium _____
Building Safety/Security	1. _____ 2. _____	Main Office/P.E. Office _____
Information (Telephone and "Walk-Ins")	1. _____ 2. _____	Library _____
Family Contact/Visitation	1. _____ 2. _____	Guidance Conference Room _____
Coordinate assistance for emergency/medical response	1. _____ 2. _____	Small Gymnasium _____
Support counseling for staff/students	1. _____ 2. _____	Guidance Offices; Career Library _____

STAFF WITH SKILLS IN MEDICAL CARE

Name	Room #	Training/certification
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

BI/MULTILINGUAL STAFF MEMBERS

Name	Room #	Language(s)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

STAFF MEMBERS WITH MOBILE/CELLULAR TELEPHONES

Name	Room #	Phone Number
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Crisis Control Center Emergency Kit

The following items shall be maintained in the designated School Crisis Control Center and carried to any alternate site which may be designated:

1. Responsibilities checklist — who does what.
2. Keys to all doors in the school facility.
3. Floor plan that shows the location of all exits, all telephones and telephone wall jacks, computer locations, and all other devices that may be useful in communication during an emergency.
4. Blueprints of school building(s), including utilities.
5. Map of evacuation route(s).
6. Faculty/staff roster with:
 - a) list indicating those with first aid, CPR, and/or EMT training.
 - b) list of mobile/cellular telephone numbers.
7. Crisis response equipment (two-way radio, cellular telephones, fully charged battery operated bullhorn).
8. Phone lists:
 - a. Community Emergency Numbers
 - General emergency number - 911
 - Police Department/Sheriff
 - Rescue/Ambulance
 - Fire Department
 - Poison Control Center
 - Local Hospitals
 - b. School Numbers:
 - Central Office telephone and fax numbers
 - List of portable telephones and beeper numbers of division staff
 - Extension numbers for school security, school health nurse, guidance services and other support staff.
 - c. Other Resource Numbers:
 - Home/work telephone numbers of parent networks, school volunteers, local clergy, and other resources previously identified.

9. Student roster including home and emergency phone numbers.
10. Master schedule.
11. Name tags and sign-in sheet for crisis response team members and community resource people.
12. Sample statements/letters for use in notifying faculty, students, and parents about crisis incident.

Classroom Crisis Response Bag

Each classroom and gymnasium should be equipped with a crisis response bag. The bag should be hung from the inside doorknob or other conspicuous location. At a minimum, the bag should contain:

1. a flashlight
2. spare batteries
3. class rosters for each class using the room
4. emergency evacuation plans
5. latex gloves
6. first aid supplies (bandages, gauze, etc.)
7. pen and paper
8. names and telephone numbers of crisis intervention team members
9. list of assigned roles for school personnel and division personnel

Crisis Checklist

DAY 1

In the event of a serious accident, sudden death, or similar events:

- _____ Direct staff and others not to repeat information until verification is obtained.
- _____ Notify superintendent.
- _____ Convene Crisis Response Team and assign duties.
- _____ Notify building support staff, such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
- _____ Inform closest friends of the affected student and provide support.
- _____ Prepare formal statement or announcement.
- _____ Announce time and place of emergency staff meeting.
- _____ Identify other/additional students, staff, and parents likely to be most affected by news.
- _____ Assess need for additional community resources.
- _____ Make official announcement.
- _____ Hold emergency staff meeting.
- _____ As needed, assign team members and other staff to monitor grounds; notify parents, support staff, and feeder schools; provide support to staff; collect student belongings and withdraw student from school rolls.

Day 1 Staff Meeting

At the first staff meeting during a school crisis:

- a. Pass around a photograph of the deceased/injured student to familiarize staff with the student.
- b. Review the facts of the crisis and dispel rumors.
- c. Help staff members process their responses to the situation.
- d. Describe the feelings that students may experience and suggest how teachers might handle specific situations.
- e. Provide guidelines for helping students who are upset.
- f. Encourage teachers to allow for expressions of grief, anger, etc., in the home room or class in which the announcement is received or in other classes throughout the day. Emphasize the acceptability/normalcy of a range of expressions. The guiding principle is to return to the normal routine as soon as possible within each class and within the school. The structure of routine provides security and comfort to all members of the school community.
- g. Encourage staff to dispel rumors whenever possible and discourage any “glorification” of the event (especially in cases of suicide).
- h. Request staff to meet 30 minutes early the next morning to review procedures and debrief. If the crisis occurs on a Friday, call the meeting for the following Monday morning.

DAY 2

- _____ Gather faculty members and update them on any additional information/procedures.
- _____ In case of death, provide funeral/visitation information if affected family has given permission.
- _____ Identify students in need of follow-up support and, in accordance with the school's crisis response plan, assign staff members to monitor the most affected students:
 - a. coordinate any ongoing counseling support for students on campus;
 - b. announce ongoing support for students with place, time, and staff facilitator; and
 - c. notify parents of affected students regarding community resources available to students and their families.

Immediately Following Resolution of the Crisis

- _____ Convene crisis response team for debriefing as soon as possible:
 - a. discuss successes and problems; and
 - b. discuss things to do differently next time.
- _____ Allow staff opportunity to discuss feelings and reactions.

Long-Term Follow-up and Evaluation

- _____ Provide list of suggested readings to teachers, parents, and students.
- _____ Amend crisis response procedures as necessary.
- _____ Write thank-you notes to out-of-building district and community resource people who provided (or are still providing) support during the crisis.
- _____ Be alert on crisis anniversaries and holidays. Often students will experience "anniversary" grief reaction the following month or year on the date of the crisis, or when similar crises occur that remind them of the original crisis. Holidays, too, often are difficult for students who have experienced loss.

Student Emergency Release Form

I/We request that:

Student Name

Student Name

Student Name

be released to me/us _____
Print your name(s)

his/her/their _____
Relationship to student

Our intended destination is _____
Location, including address

Signature: _____

Telephone Number: _____

To be Completed by School Release Team

_____ Requester on emergency sheet – Student Released

_____ Requester NOT on emergency sheet but student released to him/her; the student knew the requester and felt comfortable being released to the requester. Parent had signed appropriate release space.

Time of Release: _____ Signature of Approval: _____

Date of Release: _____

(Source: Colonial Heights High School/Tech Center Emergency Plan)

**COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL
Transportation List**

METHOD OF TRANSPORT

- _____ WALK
- _____ RIDE (CAR)
- _____ BUS (#)

STUDENT NAME	EMERGENCY CONTACT
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	
20.	
21.	

Evacuation Partner School/Facility

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the school building(s), the Principal, in consultation with the School Superintendent, may decide to transport the students and staff to another county school. The designated partner school is listed below. This partnership is reciprocal so that if an emergency occurred at the partner school, this school would host students from that school.

This partnership is designed to avoid the problems and liability of dismissing and sending young children home early without proper supervision. This decision will be influenced by many related conditions at the time of the incident — including the time of day, season of the year, urgency of the evacuation, and weather or civil conditions in the community.

The receiving school will use the gymnasium, cafeteria, library or other common area to house the evacuated students for the remainder of the school day. Bus schedules must be adjusted to accommodate these circumstances.

Partner School

Location of School: _____

Principal: _____

Assistant Principal: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Capacity: _____

Location at Partner School Where Evacuated Students Will Be Sheltered:

Bus Schedule: _____

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Crises Requiring Limited School Involvement

Crises Occurring During Summer or Holiday Periods

If a school administrator or other crisis response team member is notified of a crisis during the summer (or when affected students are off-track if they attend year-round schools), the response usually will be one of limited school involvement. In that case, the following steps should be taken:

1. Institute the phone tree to disseminate information to Crisis Response Team members and request a meeting of all available members.
2. Identify close friends/staff most likely to be affected by the crisis. Keep the list and recheck it when school reconvenes.
3. Notify staff or families of students identified in # 2 and recommend community resources for support, as appropriate.
4. Notify general faculty/staff by letter or telephone with appropriate information.
5. Provide update at faculty meeting held prior to students' return to school.
6. Be alert for repercussions among students and staff. When school reconvenes, check core group of friends and other at-risk students and staff, and institute appropriate support mechanisms and referral procedures.

Crises that occur during vacation or when students are off-track require fewer responses from the school.

Caring for the Caretakers

Debriefing

The demands of responding to a crisis are intense and place the caretakers, regardless of training or previous experience, under a great deal of stress. It is strongly recommended that crisis team members who have been involved in a crisis have the opportunity for “debriefing,” preferably with a trained crisis team from another school. For team members, the debriefing is an opportunity to express feelings and receive emotional support; for the other team, the debriefing is an opportunity to learn and to become better prepared for crises.

Symptoms of Reaction to Crisis or Disaster in Adults

First Reactions:

1. Numbness, shock, difficulty believing what has occurred or is in the process of occurring. Physical and mental reactions may be very slow or confused.
2. Difficulty in decision making. Uncertainty about things; it may be difficult to choose a course of action or to make even small judgement calls.

Ongoing Reactions:

1. Loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, loss of interest or pleasure in everyday activities.
2. Desire to get away from everyone — even family and friends.
3. Emotional liability; becoming irritable or upset more quickly than usual.
4. Feelings of fatigue, hopelessness, helplessness.
5. Digestive problems; headaches or backaches.
6. Difficulty accepting that the crisis has had an impact or accepting support from friends and the community.

Some Things That Can Be Helpful for Crisis Team Members and Other School Staff

- Take time to relax and do things you find pleasant. Getting away for a few hours with close friends can be helpful.
- Stick with your regular routine for a while; avoid making changes, even if it appears to be a positive change.
- Get regular exercise or participate in a regular sport; activity soothes anxiety and helps you relax.
- Keep your days as simple as possible; avoid taking on any additional responsibilities or new projects.
- Tap sources of assistance with your workload — have students, instructional assistants, or volunteers help grade papers, take care of copying, or help with other time-consuming tasks.
- If symptoms of stress persist beyond a few weeks or are severe, seek professional help.

Post-Traumatic Stress Reactions

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotional</u>
Nausea	Slowed thinking	Anxiety
Upset stomach	Difficulty making decisions	Fear
Tremors (<i>lips, hands</i>)	Difficulty in problem solving	Guilt
Feeling uncoordinated	Confusion	Grief
Profuse sweating	Disorientation (<i>especially to place and time</i>)	Depression
Chills	Difficulty calculating	Sadness
Diarrhea	Difficulty concentrating	Feeling hurt
Chest pain (<i>should be checked at hospital</i>)	Difficulty naming common objects	Feeling abandoned
Rapid heartbeat	Seeing the event over and over	Worry about others
Rapid breathing	Distressing dreams	Wanting to hide
Increased blood pressure	Poor attention span	Wanting to limit contact with others
Headaches		Anger
Muscle aches		Irritability
Sleep disturbance		Feeling numb
		Startled
		Shocked

(Source: Chesapeake City Public Schools)

Medical Protocols

Medical protocols are developed by the Department of Health Services for all students whose medical conditions require or may require assistance of school personnel. Classroom teachers and other staff who work directly with these students are provided information about the condition and a protocol to follow. Conditions which are almost always present in the student population and may require assistance include asthma, allergies, diabetes, and epilepsy.

IV. CRITICAL INCIDENT/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Overview

Intent

Critical incidents and emergencies involve threats of harm to students, personnel, and/or facilities and require immediate and effective responses.

Interagency Agreements

Jefferson County Public Schools has entered into agreements with various county governmental agencies, including mental health, police, and fire departments. The agreements specify the type of communications and services provided by one agency to another. The agreements also make school division personnel available beyond the school setting in the event of a disaster or traumatic event taking place in the community.

Identifying and Responding to Imminent Warning Signs

Unlike early warning signs (outlined in Section V, beginning page 65), imminent warning signs indicate that a student is very close to behaving in a way that is potentially dangerous to self and/or to others. Imminent warning signs require an immediate response.

No single warning sign can predict that a dangerous act will occur. Rather, imminent warning signs usually are presented as a sequence of overt, serious, hostile behaviors or threats directed at peers, staff, or other individuals. Usually, imminent warning signs are evident to more than one staff member—as well as to the child’s family.

Imminent warning signs may include:

- C Serious physical fighting with peers or family members.
- C Severe destruction of property.
- C Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons.
- C Detailed threats of lethal violence.
- C Possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons.
- C Other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.

When warning signs indicate that danger is imminent, safety must always be the first and foremost consideration. Action must be taken immediately. Immediate intervention by school authorities and law enforcement officers is needed when a child:

- Has presented a detailed plan (time, place, method) to harm or kill others — particularly if the child has a history of aggression or has attempted to carry out threats in the past.
- Is carrying a weapon, particularly a firearm, and has threatened to use it.

In situations where students present other threatening behaviors, parents should be informed of the concerns immediately. School communities also have the responsibility to seek assistance from appropriate agencies, such as child and family services and community mental health.

(Source: *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*)

School Threat Assessment Response Protocol

Mission Statement

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a mechanism to assure that threats of violence in a school environment are addressed, whenever possible, before they occur. The protocol is intended to identify credible threats of violence and address those threats and the individual making the threat before the threat is carried out. *NOTE: This protocol is applicable during any school-sponsored event or function, whether the event or function be on school property or not.*

Procedures

The following procedure is separated into several sections in order to reflect those instances where a threatened act of violence may be received by specific individuals.

1. Any student, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
 - Assume threat is serious;
 - Immediately report the threat to a parent, guardian, school staff, administrator or law enforcement officer;
 - Be available and cooperative in providing a statement of information, with the understanding that the information source (student) will remain anonymous to the greatest extent possible.

2. Any parent or guardian, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
 - Assume threat is serious;
 - Immediately report the threat to a school staff member, school administrator or law enforcement officer;
 - Be available and cooperative in providing a statement of information, with the understanding that the information source (parent or guardian) will remain anonymous to the greatest extent possible.

3. Any school staff member, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
 - Assume threat is serious;
 - Immediately report the threat to a school administrator their designee;
 - Be available and cooperative in providing a statement of information, with the understanding that the information source (the staff member) will remain anonymous to the greatest extent possible.

4. Any school administrator, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
 - Assume threat is serious;
 - Cause the student making the threat, if said student is on campus, to be immediately removed from the classroom and segregated into a secured area pending further investigation.
 - Immediately notify the designated law enforcement officer assigned to the school and provide the officer with complete information regarding the information received.
 - Require the school staff member, if this is the source of the information, to provide immediate written statements regarding the information received.

5. The designated law enforcement officer, upon receiving information that a person is threatening to commit an act of violence, shall:
 - Assume threat is serious;
 - Immediately conduct an assessment interview of the subject making the threat. The assessment interview will include at least one administrator .
NOTE: The primary purpose of the interview is to engage in an assessment of the available information, in an attempt to determine the veracity of the threat, in order to decide what level of follow-up action is needed and appropriate.

6. Once the assessment is complete, the law enforcement officer and administrator shall convene privately to discuss the threat and consider options for follow-up action.
 - A. If it is agreed the threat is credible:
 1. The law enforcement officer shall immediately consult with the Jefferson County Commonwealth's Attorney.
 2. The school administrator shall take administrative action in accordance with School Board policy.
 3. The student's parents or guardian shall be notified in accordance with School Board policy.
 - B. If it is agreed that the threat is not credible, the school administrator shall assume responsibility to institute any further action deemed necessary.

7. Once the situation has been assessed and action taken, the school principal assumes the responsibility for reporting to the Superintendent.

Follow-Up Considerations

The Threat Assessment Response Protocol shall be periodically reviewed to assess its effectiveness. Changes should be made, as needed, based on actual experiences.

Suggested Procedures for Handling Fights in School Settings

- Walk briskly – don't run
- Get help along the way
- Assess and evaluate:
 - the number of schools involved
 - the size of students involved
 - any weapons that are involved
 - proximity of individuals who can assist
 - Recognize that there may be several subtle things going on simultaneously that are being tangibly expressed in the conflict. Is there gang involvement? What other alliances might exist?
- Dismiss the audience
- Identify yourself to the fighters
- Call the student by name
- Stay away from the middle of the conflict
- Remove glasses
- Give specific commands in a firm, authoritative voice
- Defer to rules, not personal authority
- Separate the aggressor and the victim
- Avoid physical force if possible
- Remove participants to neutral locations
- Obtain identification
- Get medical attention if necessary
- Describe incident in writing
- Debrief relevant teachers
- Provide protection and support for victims
- Provide counseling – not simply the day after the event, but as long as necessary
- Report incident to law enforcement and other child serving agencies who may be serving the youngster

(Source: National School Safety Center, 1995)

Lockdown Procedure Commonwealth High School

In cases of an emergency requiring lockdown, the following procedure will be followed by staff and students.

1. Principal or his designee will announce over the public address system that a lockdown is in effect.
2. One of the secretaries will be directed to call 911 and notify the police of our emergency and the need for immediate police assistance.
3. The following announcement will be made:

A. Class in Session (no lunches in progress)

“Students and Staff” – It is necessary at this time to begin a school wide lockdown. All students are to remain in class. Students in the hall report immediately back to your room. Teachers lock your classroom door. No one is to leave the classroom until an all clear announcement is made by an administrator. Ignore a fire alarm. If we need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made.

B. Class Change in Progress

“Students and Staff” – It is necessary at this time to begin a school wide lockdown. All students and teachers report immediately to your next class. Teachers, be at your classroom door and lock as soon as the students have arrived. Ignore a fire alarm. If we need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made.

C. During Lunch Bells

“Students and Staff” – It is necessary at this time to begin a school wide lockdown. Students in the cafeteria are to report immediately to the (gym or auditorium –whichever is appropriate). Teachers lock your classroom doors. Students outside of their classroom at this time are to report back to your class immediately. No one is to leave their classroom or designated area until an all clear announcement is made by an administrator. Ignore a fire alarm. If we need to evacuate the building, an announcement will be made.

During the lockdown announcement, the administrator and head custodian will lock the exit doors.

D. Teachers are to do the following:

1. Lock your door.
2. Tell the students that we have an emergency and you don't know what it is.
3. Get the students to go to an area of the room that is away from the door and away from the windows.
4. Have students stay there until an announcement is made. Members of the crisis team will come to your room and update you.

Communications among administrators will be by walkie-talkie to assess situation and plan next course of action.

The school nurse and attendance clerk will report immediately to the main office during lockdown announcement.

Security Monitors will report to the nearest classroom and maintain radio contact with administrators.

(Sources: Great Bridge High School, Chesapeake City Public Schools and Staunton City Public Schools)

Hostage Situations/Barricaded Captor

Overview

- A hostage situation is any situation in which a person or persons are forced to stay in one location by one or more individuals. Weapons are usually in the possession of the hostage taker(s) and hostages are threatened with some degree of bodily harm should they not comply with the directives of the hostage taker(s). Certain demands are usually made of outside officials in return for the release of the hostages.
- All hostage situations are dangerous events.
- A hostage taker might be a terrorist, fleeing felon, disgruntled employee (past or present), employee's spouse, drug or alcohol abuser, emotionally disturbed person, trespasser, and on occasion, a parent, student or citizen who is usually angry about some situation and decides to resolve it by taking hostages and making demands to achieve some resolution.
- Likewise, the dynamics of a hostage situation vary greatly and no two incidents will be the same.

Plan of Action: - Buildings

Upon notification of a hostage situation within any activity, event, school, or building under the control of the Jefferson County Public Schools, the following procedures should be implemented:

- **Principal:** The principal/administrative head or designated individual will assume command of the situation until the arrival of the Jefferson County Police Department at the scene. Security officers should work closely with the principal/administrative head/designee to ensure that this plan of action is safely achieved. School radios should be utilized when it is established that the hostage taker does not have one. If he does, radios should not be used.
- **Containment:** Appropriate actions should be taken to isolate the hostage taker and the victims under his control. It is important that no additional individuals be exposed to the hostage taker.
- **Evacuation:** Using a pre-arranged signal, immediately evacuate the building and ensure that egress of students and personnel is done in a manner that they do not go near the area controlled by the hostage taker. All individuals should proceed to a prearranged location out of sight of the building so that the possibility of injury from gunfire is minimized. Students are to remain under the supervision of Jefferson County Public Schools officials.

- **Re-entry:** Ensure that no individuals enter or re-enter the building.
- **Contact 911:** Immediately have a staff member contact 911 and give all available information to the dispatcher who will relay the information to the Jefferson County Police Department. Ensure that the caller remains on the line with the 911 dispatcher until police actually arrive at the scene. This will ensure that accurate, detailed information is relayed to responding officers and school officials can respond to requests of the police department.
- **Contact Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Operations:** Immediately have another staff member contact the Office of the Deputy Superintendent for Operations at _____ and give all available information to that office. Ensure that the caller remains on the line with the Office of the Deputy Superintendent until such time as directed to terminate the call by that Office.
- **Deputy Superintendent for Operations:** The Office of the Deputy Superintendent for Operations will immediately contact the Superintendent, the Director of Informational Services, the Coordinator of Security, the Director of Transportation, and the Director of School Plant Facilities.
- **Jefferson County Police Department:** Upon response of the Jefferson County Police Department, control of the scene will be assumed by that Department.
- The principal or building administrator should maintain contact with the Jefferson County Police Department and report to the Command Center when it is operational. *It is important that the items such as building keys and detailed building plans be made available to the police department.* Important information such as camera and monitoring locations, hearing and broadcast devices, motion sensors, location of radios, availability of phones, *et cetera*, must be conveyed to the police department. Anecdotal information regarding the cause of the incident, identity of the hostages and hostage takers, and their location in the building is of great importance. The principal, custodial staff, and plant personnel who are knowledgeable of the building design need to describe the premises using the detailed building plans.
- **Response by Jefferson County Public Schools Officials:** The Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent for Operations, Director of Informational Services, Director of Transportation, Director of School Plant Facilities, and the Coordinator of Security should respond to the Command Center.
- **Media:** The Director of Informational Services and the Public Information Officer for the Jefferson County Police Department will handle all press matters as well as the dissemination of information to students and parents at the scene.

- **Director of Transportation:** The Director of Transportation will, at the direction of the Superintendent or his designee, coordinate the utilization of school buses to evacuate students to another location or to their homes.
- **Director of School Plant Facilities:** The Director of School Plant Facilities will interface with appropriate officials of the Jefferson County Police Department to ensure that all their needs are met with regards to the facility under siege.
- **Negotiations:** It is important to remember that it is the philosophy of the Jefferson County Police Department to end a hostage situation through negotiating tactics. Often it is a lengthy process. An assault is only used when all indications are that the hostage taker will harm the hostages and lives will in fact be saved through such an assault.
- **Closure:** Upon the arrest of the hostage taker and the release of the hostages the control of the school or building will be returned to Jefferson County Public Schools.

Plan of Action: - School Bus

Consideration must be given to the possibility of a hostage situation occurring on a bus operated by Jefferson County Public Schools. If such an incident occurs, the following procedures should be implemented.

- **Bus Driver:** The bus driver must assume a position of heightened responsibility for the welfare of the students on the bus as well as his/her own safety. Sound judgment, good decision making, knowledge of school and police procedures in handling such incidents, and training are the items that will be of greatest assistance to you should you become a victim. Students must be made aware of the behavior that will be required of them so they will be safe and do not inflame an already volatile situation.

The bus driver should accomplish the following tasks if they can be done in a safe manner:

- _____ Disable the bus or throw the keys away from the bus. This will eliminate the need to move the bus and will be helpful to the Jefferson County Police Department who will respond to the scene as soon as the location has been established.
- _____ Evacuate as many students as possible from the bus and direct them to move to a position out of sight of the bus.
- _____ Clear the area of as many students and others as is safely possible.
- _____ Notify the transportation radio dispatcher of as much information as possible regarding your situation and location. If allowed to maintain radio contact, do so. All radio transmissions must be disciplined.

- **Transportation Department:** The dispatch office should call 911 and the Deputy Superintendent for Operations and all procedures set out in the Plan of Action for Buildings should be implemented.

Employee Victim-Hostage

- A situation may arise in which you become a hostage.
- Other individuals, such as students, employees, and citizens may become hostages at the same time.
- Remember that each incident involving hostages is different. Variables such as hostage takers, hostages, motivation for the act, and location of the incident make each occurrence unique. Sound judgment, good decision making, knowledge of school and police procedures in handling such incidents, and training are the items that will be of greatest assistance to you should you become a victim.

Responsibility:

- The major responsibility of individuals who have become hostages is to remain calm and act in a manner that will preserve their life, as well as the lives of other hostages.
- If in fact the other hostages are students, Jefferson County Public Schools personnel have the additional duties of ensuring that these children are aware of the behavior that will be required of them so they will be safe and do not inflame an already volatile situation.
- Initially, you may be the person who is thrust into the role of negotiating with the hostage taker(s). Always remain calm and request that the situation end by the release of the hostages or the escape of the hostage takers from the area. At all times, remain neutral regarding the reasons given by the hostage taker(s) for taking this action. Your concern is safety and the release of the hostages. Further, responses of the hostage taker may be irrational or illogical, depending upon his/her mental condition and/or the stress of the situation.

Jefferson County Police Department:

- Be prepared to wait, as the resolution of hostage situations traditionally takes time. Be assured that Jefferson County Public Schools and the Jefferson County Police Department are acting on your behalf, and are acting as quickly as possible.
- The Jefferson County Police Department Crisis Negotiator will contact the hostage taker and begin the process of negotiating an end to the situation. If requested to talk to the negotiator, the Jefferson County Public Schools' employee should do so. Answer all questions as fully as possible. At this point, the negotiator has the major responsibility to successfully end the situation.
- At the conclusion of the situation, the Jefferson County Police Department will request that you talk at some length with a police officer so that all pertinent information can be recorded.

(Source: Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk, VA)

Tornado/Severe Weather

Each school should develop a tornado drill annually. Procedures for both Tornado *Watch* and Tornado *Warning* will be practiced.

Each school should develop a map to determine *areas of shelter* to be used during a tornado emergency. Areas of large roof expanses (gyms and cafeterias), and areas with considerable glass should not be used as shelters. The safest shelter areas are interior windowless rooms and hallways that have load-bearing walls and are on the lowest possible level. Upon request, Risk Management & Security staff will assist school staff in conducting a building assessment.

Tornado Watch -

(No funnel clouds have been sighted but weather conditions exist that are conducive to their formation.)

Principal

1. Advise teachers and staff via the P.A. system that a tornado *watch* is in effect.
2. Advise teachers to review the “drop and tuck” command and designated *areas of shelter* with students.
3. Designate staff to monitor NOAA and television broadcasts for additional information.
4. Bring students located outside of the building or in classroom trailers into the main building.
5. Advise the custodian or building engineer to be prepared to shut off the main gas supply valve in the event of a tornado *warning*.
6. Ensure that a plan is in place to assist special needs students and staff.
7. Have an alternate plan of communication ready should there be a loss of power (e.g., bull horn, phone tree, runners, etc.)

Teachers

1. Review the “drop and tuck” command and designated *areas of shelter* with students.
2. Close windows and blinds.
3. Be prepared to “drop and tuck” under desks if the immediate command is given over the P.A. system or if there is an immediate need to do so.

Tornado Warning -

(A funnel cloud(s) has been sighted or indicated on radar. The approximate location and direction is usually broadcast during the warning.)

Principal

1. Advise teachers and staff of the tornado *warning*.
2. Advise all teachers to escort classes to their pre-designated *areas of shelter*.
3. Notify pre-designated staff to keep a look out in order to “spot” tornado funnels. Depending on their position, these staff may need a means to make immediate contact with the Principal if a funnel cloud is sighted.
4. Be prepared to give the “drop and tuck” command via the P.A. system if danger is imminent. Occupants may need to “drop and tuck” under desks if they have not yet been moved to *areas of shelter* in the school.
5. Delay bus departures.
6. Parents picking up students should be advised of the tornado *warning* and persuaded to stay with their child.
7. Have immediate access to the contents of the “Emergency Management Kit” and distribute flashlights as necessary.

Teachers

1. Escort students to the pre-designated *areas of shelter*.
2. Take a class roster and account for all students.
3. Ensure that students sit quietly against a wall on the floor and that they understand the “drop and tuck” command.
4. Close all fire doors and gates along the corridor to minimize injury from flying debris.

Custodian/Engineer

1. Shut off main gas supply valve.
2. Be prepared to shut off all other utilities if necessary.

Bus Drivers

1. Drive at a ninety-degree angle from the funnel cloud and seek shelter in the closest building if there is time.
2. If no building is available, highway underpasses can provide protection. Park the bus down wind so it will not be blown back to your position. Escort the students to shelter up under the underpass.
3. If caught near the open, escort the students to a low area such as a ditch, ravine, or culvert.
4. Have students lie face down with hands covering their heads.
5. Report in as soon as danger has passed.

Building Is Struck by a Tornado -

Principal

1. Ensure utilities are shut off.
2. Call 911 and give a situation report.
3. Determine who was injured and administer first aid.
4. Carefully evacuate damaged areas.
5. Notify: Superintendent
Risk Management & Security
6. Take roll and conduct a search for missing students and staff, if safe to do so.
7. Account for and release students to parents only after a complete roll call has been reported.
8. Maintain a list of all injured students and staff. Keep an accurate record of the hospitals to which any were sent.
9. Establish a means to disseminate information to parents and media.

Tornados

Danger Signs:

Severe Thunderstorms - thunder, lightning, heavy rains, and strong winds

Hail - pellets of ice from dark-clouded skies

Roaring Noise - like a hundred railroad locomotives; a crashing thunderous sound

Funnel - dark, spinning “rope” or column from the sky to the ground

Drop and Tuck

- Protect Yourself -

- Lie Face Down -

- Draw Your Knees Up Under You -

- Cover The Back of Your Head with Your Hands -

Fujita Tornado Scale

F-0: 40-72 mph, chimney damage, tree branches broken

F-1: 73-112 mph, mobile homes pushed off foundation or overturned

F-2: 113-157 mph, considerable damage, mobile homes demolished, trees uprooted

F-3: 158-206 mph, roofs and walls torn down, trains overturned, cars thrown

F-4: 207-260 mph, well-constructed walls leveled

F-5: 261-318 mph, homes lifted off foundation and carried considerable distances, autos thrown as far as 100 meters

Information obtained at: www.doe.state.in.us/safety/level3/tornado.htm and www.fema.gov/library/tornado.htm
(Source: Department of Risk Management and Security, Prince William County Public Schools, Manassas, VA)

Fire Procedures

In the event a fire is detected within a school building, proceed according to the following plan:

1. Sound the **FIRE ALARM** by pulling the alarm system located in the halls or in specific rooms.
2. Close all doors and windows, including any doors separating sections of the building and at stairwells to confine the fire.
3. Evacuate the building immediately to at least 300 feet from the structure and out of the fire department's operational area.
4. Make special provisions for handicapped students.
 - Specific persons, plus alternates, should be assigned to assist specific handicapped individuals.
 - Evacuate plans for the handicapped should be reviewed and practiced and periodically updated.
5. Initiate roll. Each teacher should leave the room with the roll book to check student names. In order to avoid confusion, all student absences should be recorded.
6. Render first aid as necessary.
7. Notify utility companies of a break or suspected break in lines which might present an additional hazard.
8. Keep access roads open for emergency vehicles.
9. Have fire department officials declare the area safe before allowing students/staff to return to school.
10. If the school needs to be closed and students transported to another location or home, contact the director of transportation at _____.

Anytime elementary pupils are sent home during the regular school day it is important to place teachers on the buses for the purpose of bringing back those students who cannot be placed in the hands of competent persons. In some cases they may be housed at another school until dismissal time.

NOTE: The custodial staff, administrators, and other appropriate personnel should be trained to use fire extinguishers to fight small fires. However, they should not endanger their lives in doing so.

Arson Cases and Fires

- School administrators have only administrative investigative responsibility. All fires will be investigated by fire investigators and/or police.
- In support of the investigative efforts by outside agencies, develop a list of events that have recently occurred in the school: disgruntled students/employees, prior fires, rivalry among students or between schools or gang activity.

False Fire Alarms

- All false alarms should be reported to the alarm monitoring facility which will notify the fire department.
- Using a floor plan of the school, locate each fire alarm station on this plan. Each time an alarm is sounded, record the exact location, date, and time of alarm. The purpose is to develop a pattern to the alarms. By establishing a time pattern, one can assign staff to provide greater adult presence in halls and stairwells.
- If false fire alarms are a persistent problem, consider initiating a sign-in/sign-out log in each classroom. Have each teacher record the name, time, and destination of each student leaving the classroom, and the time each student returns. These lists will be a valuable asset in attempting to develop a list of suspects.
- Consideration should be given to installing special covers over the pull stations that will sound a local alarm prior to sending a general alarm. Schools using this type of device have found a marked decline in alarms. Before any such device is installed, check with the fire department to get their approval.
- *Other Considerations:* A very effective tool in reducing false fire alarms is to involve the student body in a program which gives them some responsibilities for “guarding” fire pull stations. Generally this requires little time and causes very little disruption to the school program. Stationing students at key locations three to five minutes before and after classes change often eliminates false fire alarms.

(Source: Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk, VA)

Emergency Shelters

Selected school buildings have been designated as emergency shelters and may be opened during hurricanes and other emergencies. Decisions as to which schools will be opened depend on specific conditions and the type of emergency. The decision to open a school is made by the county's coordinator of emergency services, in conjunction with the superintendent's staff.

A. The following school buildings have been designated as emergency shelters:

George Washington High	John Tyler Middle	Woodrow Wilson Elementary
Thomas Jefferson High	William Henry Harrison Middle	James Monroe Elementary
		James Madison Elementary

NOTE: In extreme emergencies schools other than those listed above may be opened as shelters.

B. Shelter Operation

1. School Personnel. A minimum of three school board employees are to be on duty at each shelter. They are:
 - *Building administrator* - either the principal or assistant principal. Duties include coordinating building use with the appropriate county employees and safeguarding school property. The principal may ask teachers to volunteer to assist at the shelter.
 - *School custodian* - duties include maintaining the facility, cleaning appropriate areas, supplying necessary restroom supplies, and cooperating with county employees. The custodian should secure areas not to be used by evacuees.
 - *Child nutrition service employees* - either the cafeteria manager or other person designated by the child nutrition services department. Duties include supervising safe operation of the kitchen and safeguarding school property. Supplies of food will be delivered to the shelter by the child nutrition services department.

2. County Employees. In addition to school personnel, each shelter will be staffed with the following county employees: a shelter manager; a nurse; a social worker; a police officer; and additional county employees.**

The shelter manager shall be responsible for:

- Providing adequate facilities.
- Preparation of the building to receive evacuees (including removal of furniture, allocation of sleeping space, placement of cots, distribution of supplies, etc.)
- Identification of evacuees.
- Maintenance of communications, both with the facility and with the Emergency Operations Center.
- Transfer of sick or injured to casualty treatment centers. Requisition and dispersal of food supplies, soap, towels, first aid supplies, etc.
- Enforcement of safety measures.
- Arrangements for transportation.
- Schedule use of sanitary facilities and enforcement of standards of cleanliness.

** Additional personnel may be added depending on the number of persons occupying the facility.

3. Additional Suggestions

- Electrical service may be disrupted during the emergency and alternate sources of light may be in short supply. Try to secure several flashlights prior to opening the shelter.
- Assist the shelter manager in posting notices of shelter rules. These may vary depending on circumstances, but should probably include:
 - < Evacuees must register.
 - < No pets are allowed.
 - < No alcohol allowed.
 - < Be considerate of others.
 - < Avoid activities that will disturb others (loud radios, etc.)
- Do not admit persons until the shelter has been officially opened.
- Have a supply of board and card games, if possible.
- Keep evacuees informed of the situation via TV or radio. Set up a separate room if possible.
- Emergency telephone numbers.
 - < Jefferson County Emergency Services _____
 - < Fire, Police, Rescue _____

(Source: Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk, VA)

V. INTERVENTION WITH STUDENTS WHO MAY BE SUICIDAL OR REPRESENT A POTENTIAL THREAT TO OTHERS

Students Who May Be Suicidal

Immediate Action

In the event that a staff member has reason to believe that a student may be suicidal or represent a potential threat to others the following action is to be taken:

1. Take all comments about suicidal thoughts seriously, especially if details of a suicide plan are shared.
2. Immediately report concerns to an administrator.
3. **Under no circumstances should an untrained person attempt to assess the severity of suicidal risk;** all assessment of threats, attempts, or other risk factors must be left to the appropriate professionals.

Response to a Suicide Attempt Not Occurring at School

When a school becomes aware that a student or staff member attempted suicide, the school must protect that person's right to privacy. Should a parent or other family member notify the school of a student's suicide attempt, the family should be referred to appropriate community agencies for support services. Staff response should be focused on quelling the spread of rumors and minimizing the fears of fellow students and staff. As opposed to convening a Crisis Response Team meeting and alerting the student body, any services provided to the person who attempted suicide must be kept confidential and coordinated with outside service providers, such as a suicide crisis counselor or hospital emergency team.

A Suicide Attempt Becomes A Crisis To Be Managed By School Staff Only When One Or More Of The Following Conditions Exist:

1. Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging.
2. Students witness police action or emergency services response.
3. A group of the attempt survivor's friends are profoundly affected by the suicide attempt and request support.

When one or more of the above conditions exists, the following should be implemented:

1. Tell the person providing the information about the suicide attempt not to repeat it elsewhere in the school.
2. If school office staff members heard the report, tell them to repeat or give out any information within or outside school unless they are specifically told to do so.
3. Have the Crisis Response Team member closest to the survivor talk to the most profoundly affected friends and determine the type support they need.
4. Provide space in the school for the identified peers to receive support services. Provide necessary passes to release these students from class to receive services.

School Reentry for a Student Who Has Attempted Suicide

Efforts to respond to suicide attempts and other traumas should be focused on making the student's return to school a comfortable one. Because families exposed to a suicide attempt experience considerable guilt and fear, they are more likely to disclose that a daughter or son has made an attempt if they know the school has a helpful, nonthreatening manner of dealing with suicide.

Because a student who attempted suicide often is at greater risk for a suicide in the months following the crisis, it is extremely important to closely monitor his or her reentry into school and to maintain close contact with parents and mental health professionals working with that student.

Assuming the student will be absent from one to four weeks after a suicide attempt and possibly hospitalized in a treatment facility, our school will follow these steps:

1. Obtain a written release of information for signed by the parents. This makes it possible for confidential information to be shared between school personnel and treatment providers.
2. Inform the student's teachers regarding the number of probable days of absence.
3. Instruct teachers to provide the students with assignments to be completed, if appropriate.
4. Maintain contact with the student to keep him/her informed of the latest developments in the school, if appropriate.
5. Seek recommendations for aftercare from the student's therapist. If the student has been hospitalized, a Crisis Response Team member should attend the discharge meeting at the hospital.
6. The Crisis Response Team member should convey relevant nonconfidential information to appropriate school staff regarding the aftercare plan.
7. Once the student returns to school, a Crisis Response Team member should maintain regular contact with him/her.
8. The school should maintain contact with the parents provide progress reports and other appropriate information, and be kept informed of any changes in the aftercare plan.

Myths and Facts About Suicide

Myth: People who talk about suicide don't commit suicide.

Fact: Most people who commit suicide have given clues of some type of to one or more people. It is not safe to assume that someone talking about suicide will not attempt it; the majority of those who attempt suicide have stated their intent to someone.

Myth: Suicide happens without warning.

Fact: While explicit verbal warnings are not always given, there are clues ahead of time. The difficulty is that not everyone recognizes the signs and symptoms that would alert him/her to the possibility of suicide.

Myth: Suicidal people are fully intent on dying.

Fact: Rather than specifically wanting to die, students who attempt/commit suicide often do so simple because they have exhausted their coping skills and see no other options for relief from pain.

Myth: Once suicidal, a person is suicidal forever.

Fact: Preoccupation with suicidal thoughts is usually time-limited. Most young people who work through a suicidal crisis can go on to lead healthy lives.

Myth: Once a person attempts suicide, the humiliation and pain will prevent future attempts.

Fact: Eighty percent of persons who commit suicide have made at least one prior attempt (Hafen & Frandsen, 1986). It is critical that concerned adults and peers monitor a student who has attempted suicide for several months following the attempt. Those students who receive help for their suicidal risk before they made an attempt have a better prognosis than those who were intervened upon following an attempted suicide.

Myth: Suicidal behavior is inherited.

Fact: As with other patterns of behavior, suicide sometimes seems to run in families. However, suicide is not a genetic trait, so it is not inherited. What can appear to be a family trait of suicide may be because family members share a common emotional environment and often adopt similar methods of coping. In a family where someone has committed suicide, suicide may be viewed as acceptable in times of distress.

Myth: Suicide occurs more often among the wealthy.

Fact: Suicide knows no socioeconomic boundaries.

Myth: People who attempt or commit suicide are mentally ill/psychotic.

Fact: Many suicidal persons historically have had difficulty in working through problems. Other people who attempt or commit suicide choose it as an option when their previously successful means of coping are not effective, and they are unable to otherwise stop the pain they are experiencing. A history of mental illness does not increase the risk of suicide.

Myth: Talking about suicide can encourage a person to attempt it.

Fact: On the contrary, initiating a discussion of suicidal feelings may give a suicidal adolescent permission to talk about the pain she/he is experiencing and, by so doing, provide significant relief. It is highly unlikely that discussing suicide would influence a nonsuicidal person to become preoccupied with the idea.

Myth: People who attempt suicide just want attention.

Fact: Suicide should be considered a “cry for help.” Persons overwhelmed by pain may be unable to let others know they need help, and suicide may seem the best way to relieve the pain. Suicidal behavior may be a desperate move to reach out for much needed help.

Myth: Suicide is most likely to occur at night as well as over the holiday season.

Fact: Suicides can occur at any time, regardless of season, time of day or night, weather or holidays. Childhood and adolescent suicides, however, are most likely to occur in the spring, and second most likely to occur in the fall. Most childhood and adolescent suicides occur at home on weekends or between the hours of 3 p.m. and midnight (Eyeman, 1987; Indiana State Board of Health, 1985).

Myth: When depression lifts, there is no longer danger of suicide.

Fact: This is a dangerous misconception. The lifting of depression often accompanies the development of a suicide plan and the final decision to commit suicide. If the improvement in mood is sudden and circumstances have not changed, the risk of suicide remains high.

(Source: Association of California School Administrators)

Students Who May Represent a Potential Threat to Others

Immediate Steps

In the event that a staff member has reason to believe that a student may represent a potential threat to others, the actions listed below are to be taken. These steps apply only to situations in which the student is presenting no immediate threat.

1. Take all comments about doing harm to others seriously, especially if details about how the acts are to be carried out are shared.
2. Immediately report concerns to an administrator.
3. **Under no circumstances should an untrained person attempt to assess the severity of the risk;** all assessment of threats, attempts, or other risk factors must be left to the appropriate professionals.

NOTE: It is important to avoid inappropriately labeling or stigmatizing individual students because they appear to fit a specific profile or set of early warning indicators. It's okay to be worried about a child, but it's not okay to overreact and jump to conclusions.

Early Warning Signs

It is not always possible to predict behavior that will lead to violence. However, educators and parents—and sometimes students—can recognize certain early warning signs. In some situations and for some youth, different combinations of events, behaviors, and emotions may lead to aggressive rage or violent behavior toward self or others. A good rule of thumb is to **assume that these warning signs, especially when they are presented in combination, indicate a need for further analysis to determine an appropriate intervention.**

We know from research that most children who become violent toward self or others feel rejected and psychologically victimized. In most cases, children exhibit aggressive behavior early in life and, if not provided support, will continue a progressive developmental pattern toward severe aggression or violence. However, research also shows that when children have a positive, meaningful connection to an adult — whether it be at home, in school, or in the community — the potential for violence is reduced significantly.

None of these signs alone is sufficient for predicting aggression and violence. Moreover, it is inappropriate — and potentially harmful — to use the early warning signs as a checklist against which to match individual children. Rather, the early warning signs are offered only as an aid in identifying and referring children who may need help. School communities must ensure that staff and students only use

the early warning signs for identification and referral purposes — only trained professionals should make diagnoses in consultation with the child’s parents or guardian.

The following early warning signs are presented with the following qualifications. They are not equally significant and they are not presented in order of seriousness. The early warning signs include:

- **Social withdrawal.** In some situations, gradual and eventually complete withdrawal from social contacts can be an important indicator of a troubled child. The withdrawal often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness, and lack of confidence.
- **Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone.** Research has shown that the majority of children who are isolated and appear to be friendless are not violent. In fact, these feelings are sometimes characteristic of children and youth who may be troubled, withdrawn, or have internal issues that hinder development of social affiliations. However, research also has shown that in some cases feelings of isolation and not having friends are associated with children who behave aggressively and violently.
- **Excessive feelings of rejection.** In the process of growing up, and in the course of adolescent development, many young people experience emotionally painful rejection. Children who are troubled often are isolated from their mentally healthy peers. Their responses to rejection will depend on many background factors. Without support, they may be at risk of expressing their emotional distress in negative ways—including violence. Some aggressive children who are rejected by non-aggressive peers seek out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce their violent tendencies.
- **Being a victim of violence.** Children who are victims of violence—including physical or sexual abuse—in the community, at school, or at home are sometimes at risk themselves of becoming violent toward themselves or others.
- **Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.** The youth who feels constantly picked on, teased, bullied, singled out for ridicule, and humiliated at home or at school may initially withdraw socially. If not given adequate support in addressing these feelings, some children may vent them in inappropriate ways — including possible aggression or violence.
- **Low school interest and poor academic performance.** Poor school achievement can be the result of many factors. It is important to consider whether there is a drastic change in performance and/or poor performance becomes a chronic condition that limits the child’s capacity to learn. In some situations—such as when the low achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised, and denigrated—acting out and aggressive behaviors may occur. It is important to assess the emotional and cognitive reasons for the academic performance change to determine the true nature of the problem.

- **Expression of violence in writings and drawings.** Children and youth often express their thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions in their drawings and in stories, poetry, and other written expressive forms. Many children produce work about violent themes that for the most part is harmless when taken in context. However, an over representation of violence in writings and drawings that is directed at specific individuals (family members, peers, other adults) consistently over time, may signal emotional problems and the potential for violence. Because there is a real danger in misdiagnosing such a sign, it is important to seek the guidance of a qualified professional—such as a school psychologist, counselor, or other mental health specialist—to determine its meaning.
- **Uncontrolled anger.** Everyone gets angry; anger is a natural emotion. However, anger that is expressed frequently and intensely in response to minor irritants may signal potential violent behavior toward self or others.
- **Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors.** Children often engage in acts of shoving and mild aggression. However, some mildly aggressive behaviors such as constant hitting and bullying of others that occur early in children’s lives, if left unattended, might later escalate into more serious behaviors.
- **History of discipline problems.** Chronic behavior and disciplinary problems both in school and at home may suggest that underlying emotional needs are not being met. These unmet needs may be manifested in acting out and aggressive behaviors. These problems may set the stage for the child to violate norms and rules, defy authority, disengage from school, and engage in aggressive behaviors with other children and adults.
- **Past history of violent and aggressive behavior.** Unless provided with support and counseling, a youth who has a history of aggressive or violent behavior is likely to repeat those behaviors. Aggressive and violent acts may be directed toward other individuals, be expressed in cruelty to animals, or include fire setting. Youth who show an early pattern of antisocial behavior frequently and across multiple settings are particularly at risk for future aggressive and antisocial behavior. Similarly, youth who engage in overt behaviors such as bullying, generalized aggression and defiance, and covert behaviors such as stealing, vandalism, lying, cheating, and fire setting also are at risk for more serious aggressive behavior. Research suggests that age of onset may be a key factor in interpreting early warning signs. For example, children who engage in aggression and drug abuse at an early age (before age 12) are more likely to show violence later on than are children who begin such behavior at an older age. In the presence of such signs it is important to review the child’s history with behavioral experts and seek parents’ observations and insights.

- **Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes.** All children have likes and dislikes. However, an intense prejudice toward others based on racial, ethnic, religious, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and physical appearance — when coupled with other factors — may lead to violent assaults against those who are perceived to be different. Membership in hate groups or the willingness to victimize individuals with disabilities or health problems also should be treated as early warning signs.
- **Drug use and alcohol use.** Apart from being unhealthy behaviors, drug use and alcohol use reduces self-control and exposes children and youth to violence, either as perpetrators, as victims, or both.
- **Affiliation with gangs.** Gangs that support anti-social values and behaviors — including extortion, intimidation, and acts of violence toward other students — cause fear and stress among other students. Youth who are influenced by these groups — those who emulate and copy their behavior, as well as those who become affiliated with them — may adopt these values and act in violent or aggressive ways in certain situations. Gang-related violence and turf battles are common occurrences tied to the use of drugs that often result in injury and/or death.
- **Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms.** Children and youth who inappropriately possess or have access to firearms can have an increased risk for violence. Research shows that such youngsters also have a higher probability of becoming victims. Families can reduce inappropriate access and use by restricting, monitoring, and supervising children's access to firearms and other weapons. Children who have a history of aggression, impulsiveness, or other emotional problems should not have access to firearms and other weapons.
- **Serious threats of violence.** Idle threats are a common response to frustration. Alternatively, one of the most reliable indicators that a youth is likely to commit a dangerous act toward self or others is a detailed and specific threat to use violence. Recent incidents across the country clearly indicate that threats to commit violence against oneself or others should be taken very seriously. Steps must be taken to understand the nature of these threats and to prevent them from being carried out.

(Source: *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.*)

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

Overview

Communication is a critical part of crisis management. School staff members and students must be told what is happening and what to do. Parents of students and families of staff members must be informed about the situation, including the status of their child or family member. Timely contact with law enforcement and other emergency services is necessary for effective response. School Board members must be kept informed and update information must be transmitted to central office and to other affected schools. The press must be informed and kept updated. Additionally, groups which are a part of the school community (PTA, advisory councils, etc.) and can assist with getting accurate information into the community are important. This chapter focuses on communication – within the school and school division, with parents and the community, and with the media.

When a Crisis Has Occurred

Notifying faculty and staff of an event or crisis and keeping them informed as additional information becomes available and as plans for management of the situation evolve is critical. Some practices which school administrators have found to be helpful include the following:

The Telephone Tree

A telephone tree is a simple, widely used system for notifying staff of a crisis event when they are not at school. A very carefully crafted statement, specifying what is and is not yet known, should be drafted before the telephone tree is activated.

The Morning Faculty Meeting

An early, brief faculty meeting provides the opportunity to give accurate, updated information about the crisis event/situation itself and to review with staff procedures for the day, including the availability of intervention resources.

The End-of-Day Faculty Meeting

A brief end-of-day meeting provides the opportunity to review day one, update information, and plan for day two. Misinformation or rumors can be addressed before staff members go home or into the community where they are likely to be asked about the situation.

School Communication

Dealing with Rumors

Establishing reliable communications networks is critical for dealing effectively with a potentially detrimental phenomenon always present in crises: rumors. People are going to talk about an emergency and, when accurate information is not available, rumors begin. Without facts, people begin to speculate and the speculations soon come to be thought of as “facts.” Left unchecked, rumors can become more difficult to deal with than the crisis event. They may create a negative perception of the school’s ability to manage an emergency or, even worse, a belief that the school cannot provide for the safety and well-being of the children. The most effective strategy for combating rumors is to provide facts as soon as possible. Some strategies which may be helpful include the following:

1. Identify and notify internal groups including administrators, teachers, students, custodians, secretaries, teaching assistants, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers. These people are primary sources of information and are likely to be contacted in their neighborhoods, at grocery stores, etc. It is critical that they have accurate information because what they know (or don’t know and are speculating about) will be passed on. A faculty/staff meeting should be held before staff members are allowed to go home so that what is (and is not) known can be clearly communicated.
2. Clerical staff who answer the telephone at the school and at the central office must know which information can be shared and which information cannot be shared. They must be kept informed of inaccurate information which is circulating so they can help “correct” misinformation. Designating a few persons to answer calls helps control the circulating of misinformation.
3. Use of key communicators in the community will also combat rumors. A telephone tree or a briefing held especially for identified community representatives directly associated with the school will help spread accurate information.
4. The media can also help control rumors; ask them to provide frequent updates to the public, particularly providing accurate information where rumors need to be dispelled.
5. After the immediately crisis has passed, public meetings may be helpful. It provides an opportunity for people to ask questions and to receive accurate information. A follow-up public meeting may also be helpful in restoring the community’s confidence in the school’s ability to manage crises and to provide a safe environment.

Using Technology for Communication

Technology can be a very effective tool for communication during a crisis. Some common tools that may be used include the following:

1. **Telephone** - Although the telephone is the most commonly used communications tool in schools, most schools do not have enough lines and, worse, service is typically lost when electricity is lost. In preparing for crises it is recommended that:
 - Schools should have at least one line with an unpublished number.
 - The telephone company should be consulted in pre-planning; there may be unused lines in the school's control panel which can be activated if needed.
 - Use standard jacks and mark them clearly so emergency service personnel can find them; the school floor plan which is part of the school's "emergency toolkit" should have the location of jacks marked clearly.
2. **Intercom systems** - Most schools have such a system; systems which include teacher-initiated communications with the office and use a handset rather than a wall-mounted speaker are most useful in an emergency. Instructions for use of the intercom system should be posted near the controls in the office area. Additionally, students should be taught to use the intercom system – the teacher may have a medical emergency or be otherwise unable to operate the system
3. **Bullhorns and megaphones** - Often used at pep rallies and field days, battery-powered bullhorns or megaphones can also be very effective tools for communication in an emergency and should be a part of the school's "emergency toolbox." Procedures governing storage of the bullhorn in the office closet in the gym may not be an option. If one is not available (or out of batteries!) at the school, law enforcement vehicles are sometimes equipped with speakers – another good reason to include law enforcement in the pre-planning process.
4. **Walkie-talkies** - routinely used in many schools, walkie-talkies provide a reliable method of communication between rooms and buildings at a single site. All staff need to know how to operate the walkie-talkie (even those who don't routinely carry them).
5. **Computer telecommunications** - a relatively new tool, the potential capability of existing computers to be used for communication both within the school and to other sites needs to be assessed as part of the pre-planning process. E-mail or electronic bulletin boards may be a useful tool for updating information for staff, central office, other schools in the affected area, and possibly for other community agencies.
6. **Fax machines** - The fax machine is a potentially valuable tool for both sending and receiving information in an emergency. In the case of off-campus accidents, for example, lists of students and staff members involved, their locations, and needed telephone numbers can be quickly and accurately communicated. Medical information, release forms, and medical authorizations can be faxed, signed, and returned in emergencies.

7. **Cellular telephones** - increasingly available and affordable, the role of cellular telephones as a communications tool needs to be carefully assessed. They may be the only tool working when electric service is out and are a particularly useful link to staff members who may be en route to or from the site of an accident or other emergency. They are increasingly being used to link the multiple vehicles transporting students and staff on off-campus trips.
8. **“Panic buttons”** - Some schools have installed “panic buttons” connected directly to the police or other emergency services. In some communities, there is an immediate response; in others, the police or fire department call the school to confirm the emergency.
9. **Alarm systems** - Bells or buzzers may be sounded in different ways to signal different types of emergencies – for example, fire, tornado, or special alert (with instructions to follow).

Voice and Hand Signals

Although not involving “technology,” voice and hand signals (and training staff and students to recognize them) are important instruments of communication in an emergency. Some signals which may be used include:

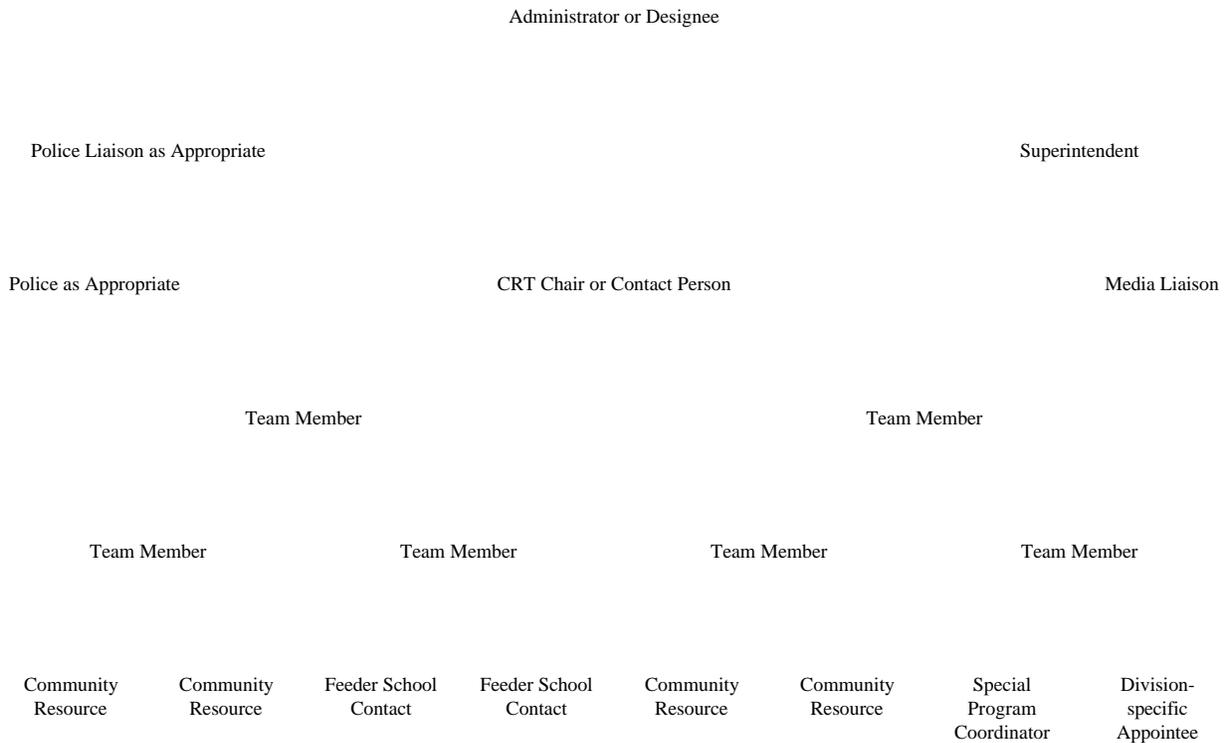
1. **Waving arms** - waving arms back and forth over head means to follow in the direction led by the teacher.
2. **Palms down** - moving arms up and down with palms toward the ground will signal students to get down on the ground wherever they are at the time.
3. **Palms out** - pushing palms out, moving arms forward and back, will signal the students to stop where they are and to stand absolutely still.
4. **Waving arms side-to-side** - moving arms side-to-side in front of the body will signal students to move away from the center of the playground and to take shelter toward the edges of the playground.

Using Code Messages

Some schools have established code words or phrases to notify staff of certain emergencies — particularly those requiring quick action. These are most appropriate for extreme emergencies such as armed intruder, sniper, or hostage situations, or for tornado warnings. Codes may signify certain levels of alert which require specific actions such as locking classroom doors, keeping students away from windows, or evacuation. It is important that all staff members — including substitutes — know the codes.

TELEPHONE TREE

Once it is verified that a crisis exists, the building administrator or designee sets the phone tree in motion. When a crisis occurs during weekends, vacation periods, or when a large number of staff is away from school, it will be necessary to transmit information via a phone tree. At other times, when crises occur when school is in session, only the people outside the school building need to be contacted via telephone.



Communications with Parents and the Community

A very important aspect of managing crises is dealing effectively with parent reactions.

Communication with parents and the community is best begun before a crisis occurs. Some useful strategies include the following:

1. Educate parents about the school crisis plan, its objectives, and the need for it. Such information can be included in the school handout or other informational materials prepared for parents, at parent orientations, or at other informational meetings.
2. Develop a relationship with parents so that they trust and feel comfortable calling school personnel in the event of crisis.
3. Develop materials that may be needed including:
 - a) draft formats of letters to parents informing them of what happened,
 - b) information really: possible reactions of their child and ways to talk with them, and
 - c) how the school and school division are handling the situation.
4. Develop a list of community resources which may be helpful to parents.
5. Identify parents who are willing to volunteer in case of an emergency, include them in preparation efforts, and include them in training.

In the event of an emergency, parents have very specific information needs. First, parents want to know their child is safe; then, parents want to know the details of the emergency situation, to know how it was handled, and to know that the children will be safe in the future. The first reactions are likely to involve *fear*. Upon learning of an incident at the school, parents are likely to descend upon the school in search of their child or to telephone, frantically seeking information. Establishing a system for responding quickly to parent needs for information is an important part of pre-planning. *Anger* is another common reaction of parents, particularly in the case of senseless acts of violence. In the event of a crisis or disaster:

1. Tell parents exactly what is known to have happened. Do not embellish or speculate.
2. Implement the plan to manage phone calls and parents who arrive at school.
3. Schedule and attend an open question-and-answer meeting for parents as soon after the incident as possible. The meeting is an opportunity for school officials to listen and respond to parent concerns (which is helpful in combating rumors and other misinformation) and to work on restoring parental trust in the school. In the event of an incident which involved damage or destruction, an open house for parents and other members of the community to see the school restored to its “normal” state helps everyone get beyond the crisis.

Communications with Media

Media policy varies from one school system to another. Contact is generally channeled through one person. Most news people are sensitive, open to suggestions and interested in doing a reputable job. When dealing with the media, the following suggestions will promote clear communications:

- Deal up-front with reporters. Be honest, forthright and establish good communication with the media before problems or a crisis occurs.
- Do not try to stonewall the media or keep them from doing their job.
- The school should decide what to say, define the ground rules, issue a statement and answer questions within the limits of confidentiality.
- Identify a single information source.
- Advise school staff of media procedures.
- Advise students of the media policy. Let them know that they do not have to talk, that they can say no.
- If the crisis is a death, consult with the deceased student/staff member's family before making any statement. Explain school system policy and assure them that confidential information is being protected.

During a Crisis:

- Attempt to define the type and extent of the crisis as soon as possible.
- Inform employees what is happening as soon as possible.
- Designate that a central source, such as the crisis communications center, coordinate information gathering and dissemination.
- Instruct all employees to refer all information and questions to communications centers.
- Remind employees that only designated spokesmen are authorized to talk with news media.
- Take initiative with news media and let them know what is or is not known about the situation.
- When communicating, remember to maintain a unified position and uniform message; keep messages concise, clear, and consistent; keep spokesman and alternates briefed.
- Contact the top administrator or designee to inform him of the current situation, emerging developments, and to clear statements.

Section VI - Communications

- Delay releasing information until facts are verified and the school's position about the crisis is clear.
- Read all releases from previously prepared and approved statements to avoid danger of ad-libbing.
- Assign sufficient staff to handle phones and seek additional information.
- Keep a log of all incoming and outgoing calls and personal contacts.
- Relieve key people from their normal duties so they may focus on the crisis.
- Express appreciation to all persons who helped handle the crisis.
- Prepare a general announcement to be given by the principal or designee. A straightforward sympathetic announcement of loss with a simple statement of condolence is recommended. Also, a statement that more information will be forthcoming, when verified, can be reassuring to students and staff.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools, Chesterfield, VA)

Tips for Working with the Media

Don't

- DON'T try to keep the media out or “kill” a story.
- DON'T say “no comment.”
- DON'T adlib.
- DON'T speak “off the record.”
- DON'T speculate.
- DON'T try to cover-up or blame anyone for anything..
- DON'T repeat negative/misleading words.
- DON'T play favorites among media.

Do

- Emphasize your good record.
- Be accurate and cooperate as best you can.
- Be prepared for and prepare in advance a response to questions which might violate confidentiality or hinder the police investigation.
- Insist that reporters respect the privacy rights of your students and staff.
- Speak to reporters in plain English — not educationese.
- When asked a question and you don't know the answer, say so, then offer to find out and call the reporter back.

Guidelines for Communicating with the Media in Times of Crisis

1. The **primary goal** should be to keep the public informed about the crisis while trying to maintain the privacy of students and ensure as little interruption of the educational process as possible.
2. As soon as possible, **prepare a written statement** that gives the basic facts clearly and concisely or ask the division Community Relations Director to prepare one for you. Two or three minutes spent writing down some specific points is valuable. If there is time, try to anticipate what some of the questions will be and prepare answers. News people will always want to know: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Try them out on your colleagues and see if they have any recurring questions. *Use the same facts* in dealing with all media so the story is consistent.
3. If news media personnel arrive on campus while students are in class, **guide** their **activities** so they will not disrupt the educational process. The news media can come onto the campus but should not be permitted to enter classrooms.
4. **Don't presume** to tell a reporter what is or isn't newsworthy. That decision is made by the reporters and their editors. And never — absolutely never — lie to a reporter. Tell the bad news quickly; get it over with. It may be your only chance to set the record straight. It's vital to establish our division as the best source for information on the crisis. If the media think you're hiding something, they're likely to dig hard for information from other sources and play the story more sensationally — and perhaps less accurately. Protecting and enhancing the division's credibility is important.
5. **Talk conversationally**, or you will inadvertently pitch your voice up and sound strained. If you don't understand the question, say so. Parroting the reporter's question is very dangerous on radio or video tape because the tape can be edited to sound like you concur whether you do or not. Suppose the reporter asks, "How are you handling this terrible shock?" Don't respond, "We are handling this terrible shock by . . ." Instead, respond in your own words to the effect that, "The students are continuing their usual schedules, following a morning assembly where we discussed the situation."
6. **Answer each question and then be silent.** Stick with the statement. Don't embellish it and don't respond to media pressure to chat about it. Just because a TV reporter sticks a microphone in your face or a radio reporter lets the tape run does not mean you have to fill that prolonged silence. Don't worry. . . your pauses will be removed in the editing process. If you are standing for the interview, don't back up, even though the microphone seems to be put down your throat. Plant your feet firmly and stand your ground. Suggest that everyone sit down if you need "space."

7. Remember that ***conflict is news***, and reporters often frame their questions to bring out the conflict or emotion in a story. Guard your students against such intrusions if grief is involved in the response. (However, if the media wants student or community viewpoint, it may be well to arrange for them to talk to your PTA president.)
8. If a reporter asks ***several questions*** at once, say something like, “You’ve asked me several questions here. . . where would you like me to begin?” If a reporter interrupts you before you’ve finished answered your question, pause, let the reporter finish, and then continue your answer. Don’t let the reporter get you off track or tell you when you’ve finished your answer. However, don’t go into lengthily detail or run off with the interview either.
9. Don’t let a reporter’s friendly, sympathetic manner disarm you into giving him/her additional information. Don’t assume any chatty comments ***“are off the record”*** even if you say they are. Keep in mind that the media aren’t in business to help you with your communication needs: the media are in business to (1) make money and (2) disseminate news. “News” can be defined as any information of interest to the public.
10. Reporters are under constant ***deadlines***, but no deadline is so important that it’s worth making an inaccurate statement. If a reporter says he/she has deadline problems, ask how long you have to get the information, and then try to obtain it within that amount of time. Don’t put reporters off: they will only get more insistent and abrasive if you do so.
11. It is best not to answer a query with ***“No comment.”*** Otherwise, the reporters may report you wouldn’t answer questions or may interpret for themselves why you aren’t answering. Instead, say, “I can’t share that information with you right now, but I will call you as soon as I can release it.” (And do call them). Or say, “I don’t know the answer, but I should have it in an hour. Please call me.” If you can’t reveal information at all, tell the reporters why. *Examples:* Relatives of an injured student haven’t been notified yet or revealing the identity of a witness would jeopardize an investigation, etc.
12. After you provide the written statement to the media or answer subsequent questions, keep a media ***log*** of whom you speak to and what you give them, whether it is the basic statement or a subsequent update. This allows you to track which medium received what information.
13. Don’t ask a reporter for ***editing rights*** or to see the story for approval before it runs. Most news media have specific policies preventing this. Reporters may well interpret these requests as insults or a slight on their competence. Don’t complain to the media if you feel you were treated unfairly. You may simply draw more attention to the crisis. If *major* story details are *inaccurate* in a

newspaper story, you can ask for a correction. But getting a similar correction in a TV or radio story is more difficult and must involve a giant inaccuracy.

14. The Community Relations Department should be *updated* on any emergency. The Community Relations Department will assist district or building administration in handling interviews with news media and coordinate the flow of information.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools, Chesterfield, VA)

VII. QUICK GUIDE TO MANAGING CRISES

Accidents at School

(Minor) Accidents at School

. . . On the playground. . . In the building or classroom. . . In physical education. . .

For minor accidents, injuries

Have students taken to clinic for assistance by a responsible person.

Related information:

- All staff have been provided with a one-page list of “emergency procedures” of what to do in case of an accident or injury on the playground, or in the building or classroom.
- Classroom emergency procedures are posted on the back of every classroom door.
- Posted in the main office, the gym office, and the clinic are the names of building staff who have completed paramedic training, Red Cross First Aid Training or other special lifesaving or life sustaining training or expertise (i.e., CPR).
- Posted in the main office, the gym office, and the clinic are a list of emergency telephone numbers.
- Post general procedures in the clinic explaining when parents are to be notified of minor mishaps.
- As part of routine medical protocols established by School Health Services, each teacher has been provided information about any student in his/her classroom having special medical or physical needs and the procedures that the teacher may follow in the event of a medical episode. These conditions might include allergies, fainting, seizures, diabetes, etc.

Accidents To and From School

In the event of accidents involving an employee or student who is on the way to or from school, first determine whether or not help is on the way.

If help is not on the way:

Telephone numbers

Call police, fire, or rescue as indicated by nature of accident

Notify Principal

Notify Superintendent's Office

Notify Director of Community Relations

Notify parents, spouse, or individual on emergency card.

If help is on the way:

- If not reached earlier, continue to try to notify parents, spouse, or named individual.
- If parents, spouse, or closest relatives are not available, discuss situation with an associate at the place of employment of the parents, guardian, spouse, or closest relative.
- Send a "calm" staff member to observe situation.

(Source: Chesterfield County Schools)

Aircraft Disaster

Aircraft crash into or near building:

Telephone numbers

Call police, fire or rescue as indicated by the accident

Call Managing Director of Facilities Services

Notify Superintendent's Office

Notify Director of Community Relations

- Utilize emergency exit plan modified to maximize safety of students.
- Students and staff should be assembled in an area as far from the crash scene as possible and should be up-hill and up-wind from the crash.
- Provide for treatment and removal of injured building occupants.
- Account for all building occupants and determine extent of injuries.

Aircraft on or near school site but no damage to building:

Call police, fire or rescue as indicated by the accident

Call Managing Director of Facilities Services

Notify Superintendent's Office

Notify Director of Community Relations

- All students and staff should remain in the buildings. Any students or staff outside should report immediately to their classroom or designated area until further instructions are received.
- No evacuations should occur unless subsequent explosions or fire endanger the building.

Allergic Reaction

Possible Symptoms:

General feeling of impending doom or fright, weakness, sweating, sneezing, short of breath, nasal itching, hives, vomiting, cough, restlessness, shock, hoarseness, swollen tongue, severe localized swelling.

First Actions:

- Assess situation, remain calm, make student/employee comfortable.
- Only move for safety reason.
- Send for immediate help and medication kit (in cases of known allergies).
- Follow medical protocol for student, if on file.
- Observe for respiratory difficulty and, if needed,
 - Call rescue squad Telephone number: _____
- Notify parent or guardian.
- Administer medication, by order of a doctor, if appropriate. Apply ice pack, keep warm.
- Record on an attached label time and site of insect sting and name of medicine, dosage and time, if appropriate.

Preventative/Supportive Actions:

- Encourage parents and guardians to list health situations on emergency card for their child.
- Encourage employees having health situations affecting them to alert building director and work associates of any difficulties and possible remedial actions.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Angry Parent*

** strategies may be adapted to use with angry employees and patrons*

- Be courteous and confident
- Remain calm
- Do not touch
- Keep at a reasonable distance
- Listen
- Allow the opportunity to vent
- Meet in a neutral, protected location
- Leave door open or have another staff member join you
- Avoid blame — focus on what can be done
- Ask:
 - “How can I help you get the services you/your child needs?”
 - “How can we work together?”
 - “What kinds of support can we put in place to help your child succeed?”

(Source: National School Safety Center)

Asbestos Release

PRINCIPAL

- Evacuate the immediate area.
- Instruct the building engineer to shut down the HVAC system.
- Ensure the affected area is sealed off and doors are closed.
- Notify: — Superintendent
 - Risk Management and Security
 - Maintenance

TEACHER AND STAFF

- Evacuate the immediate area.
- Seal off the area by closing doors when exiting.
- Notify the Principal.
- Note all persons who were in the area of the asbestos release.

(Source: Department of Risk Management and Security, Prince William County Public Schools, Manassas, VA)

Assault by Intruder

Checklist

- ___ Assess the situation.
- ___ If continued danger, institute lockdown.
- ___ Provide first aid.
- ___ Question victim - make reasonable notes for potential court case:
 - description of assailant
 - report of events
- ___ Contact police (School Resource Officer and/or 911)
- ___ Notify Superintendent.
- ___ Instruct person answering the telephone to direct all requests to Public Information Office
- ___ Complete police information for charges.
- ___ Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- ___ Schedule follow-up programs for staff and students.
- ___ Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Assess the Situation:

- Request police assistance when assailant(s) are outsiders.
- Determine the number of victims.
- Determine the amount of threat still pending - was this an isolated incident which is now over?
- Is there continued danger to the individuals already involved or to any other potential victims?
- Determine the need for first aid.

2. Move Others to Safety:

If the assailant has not been contained and continues to be a threat to others, institute lockdown.

3. Provide First Aid:

Provide first aid for victim(s) via nurse, nurse's aide, trained staff member, or 911. Have someone at the entrance to meet and direct the ambulance staff to the victim and designate a staff member to accompany victim(s) in ambulance.

4. Question the Victim:

Make notes which can be shared with the police upon their arrival. These notes may be helpful in a court case.

5. Contact the Police:

Contact 911 and your School Resource Officer.

6. Notifications:

- The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
- The Public Information Office will handle all media and community inquiries into the event(s).
- The parents (or spouse) of the victim should be notified as soon as possible.
- Inform staff of situation as soon as possible. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to the other staff members so your time can be used for other decisions/actions.
- The Transportation Department can, in extreme emergencies, provide buses for early dismissal. The Transportation Department will notify the Superintendent of the need for this dismissal.
- The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumors.
- The other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible by the Public Information Office, since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the disturbance.
- The Pupil Personnel Services may be needed to provide counseling support for students and staff in dealing with the trauma. This office may seek additional help from the County's Department of Human Resources.
- The parents of other students in the community will need to learn the real facts, just as their children have learned them, to reduce the rumor factor.
- After the crisis is over, the principal may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.

7. Telephone Answerer:

Prepare a statement for the individuals who answer the telephones to read. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the telephone number for the caller to use as a reference.

8. Police Information for Charges:

The police will need to be sure of details from you as well as from the victim. Assault/Battery are chargeable offenses.

9. Written Memo for Staff and Parents:

As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over, the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action that you did. Individuals with the correct facts can help to stop rumors and misperceptions.

10. Follow-Up Programs

School guidance counselors will arrange special counseling for students and staff through Pupil Personnel Services.

11. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Adapted from procedures developed by Henrico County Public Schools)

Bomb Threat

Bomb Threat/Telephone Threats

The building director must evaluate the seriousness of bomb threats or other disruptive types of demonstrations using input from all sources; then, the director acts in such a manner that reflects the best safety interests of those under his/her charge.

Bomb and other threats may be originated in writing, in person, over the telephone or related through a second source.

Basic Documentation - The individual taking the call should:

- Keep the caller on the line as long as possible.
- Notify principal/building director.
- Write down all the information obtained in the exact words. Use the record sheet immediately following these instruction pages; place copies of the bomb threat sheet at switchboard and other appropriate phone locations.
- Find out what time the bomb is due to go off.
- Document in writing, as soon as possible, other types of threat contacts including:
 - Specific time message is received.
 - Date and day of week.
 - Exact wording of message.
 - Estimation of sex, age, cultural background of person making call.
 - Make note of background noises, tone of voice.

Authorities to be involved:

Telephone numbers

Police

Directors below will immediately notify Deputy and the Superintendent.

It is only necessary to call one of the following:

Managing Director, Facilities of Services

Director of Community Relations

Environmental Health and Safety Office

The building administrator or designee shall:

- Notify the authorities.
- Consider the safety of students and staff as the prime factor. If advised, direct students and staff to safe areas of the campus. Nothing is to be touched or altered; do not open desks or lockers.

Do not re-enter building until authorized:

- Alert staff of situation and implement building search procedure (see below).
- School activities should be continued as normally as possible in designated safe areas.
- The recommendation to close school will be made only after consultation between the Central Office, security and building administrator.
- Submit written reports as appropriate to Director, Department of Facilities following the incident.

Confidential building search procedures for use by staff only:

The principal and/or assistant principal will:

- A. Call Police Department.
- B. Call Superintendent's Office.
- C. Call Maintenance Department.
- D. Notify school staff by pre-arranged signal.

The Signal:

An announcement over the public address system such as the following:

PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO SEND TRANSCRIPTS TO THE OFFICE TODAY.

A fire drill will be called about 15 minutes before threatened time, if known.

- Following the signal, the staff will conduct a thorough search of assigned areas as outlined below. If anything is found, it should not be touched in any way. Get an adult to “watch it,” while you report it personally to the principal. Following the search, each staff member responsible for searching areas (all teachers and others) must send a note to the office reading, for example, “Brown - Clear.”
- Responsibilities for search effort:

All search efforts should be conducted quietly and quickly without alarming or informing pupils. Each teacher will search his own area, in addition to the following search responsibilities:

Custodial closets	Lead Custodian I
Girl’s toilet	Principal, assistant or designee
Boy’s toilet	Principal, assistant or designee
Mechanical room	Lead Custodian I/HVAC Tech.
Library, office and a.v. room	Librarian
Food service area, dining room	Cafeteria manager
Principal’s office and other areas	Office personnel
Outdoor storage	Lead Custodian I

Checklist

- ___ Listen carefully to the caller to gain as much information as possible. Notify the building School Resource Officer if the caller is in the building.
- ___ If the call appears to be a crank call, ask teachers to survey their instruction area and nearby restrooms.
- ___ If the call could be real and the School Resource Officer is not in the building, call 911 immediately.
- ___ Evacuate the building. DO NOT USE PA SYSTEM OR TURN LIGHTS ON OR OFF.
- ___ Notify Superintendent’s Office
- ___ Follow established Policy regarding return to the building.
- ___ If necessary, give contact transportation to arrange for early dismissal.
- ___ Follow-up activities.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Bomb Threat Report Form

Make numerous copies and keep them at switchboard or main telephone for immediate use by operator/secretary.

Questions to Ask

1. When is bomb going to explode?
2. Where is it right now?
3. What does it look like?
4. What kind of bomb is it?
5. What will cause it to explode?
6. Did you place the bomb?
7. Why?
8. What is your address?
9. What is your name?

Exact wording of threat:

Time: _____ **Date:** ___ / ___ / ___
Sex of caller: _____ **Culture:** _____
Age: _____ **Length of call:** _____

Number at which call was received: _____

Caller's Voice

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Nasal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Stutter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excited | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slow | <input type="checkbox"/> Raspy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft | <input type="checkbox"/> Ragged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud | <input type="checkbox"/> Clearing Throat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep Breathing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying | <input type="checkbox"/> Cracking Voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Normal | <input type="checkbox"/> Disguised |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distinct | <input type="checkbox"/> Accent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred | <input type="checkbox"/> Familiar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whispered | |

If voice is familiar, who did it sound like?

Background Sounds

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Street | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Noises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PA System | <input type="checkbox"/> Static |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voices | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motor | <input type="checkbox"/> House Noises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Machinery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Booth | <input type="checkbox"/> Long Distance |

Threat Language

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foul | <input type="checkbox"/> Well spoken (educated) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taped | <input type="checkbox"/> Irrational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Message read by threat maker: | <input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent |

Remarks: _____

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools, Chesterfield, VA)

Bus Accident

Goals:

- Safety
- Containment
- Effective communication
- Mobilization
- Assessment and follow-up

Prevention:

Have a clear operation plan and be familiar with that plan. Maintain a bus accident folder including a list of each bus number, names and emergency telephone numbers of all occupants.

Intervention:

In the event that a bus accident occurs and the school has been contacted for assistance, the principal or designee determines and coordinates the appropriate responses. Interventions may include:

At the Scene

- Provide emotional support
- Be available and attend to the injured, as directed by emergency medical personnel.
- Be available and attend to the uninjured and account for all.

At the School

- Provide emotional support and coordination
- Provide emotional support and attend to the affected students
- Provide information to faculty.
- Call Mental Health for assistance, as needed
- Contact parents of students involved.

At the Hospital

- Provide emotional support for the injured and their families.

Follow-up:

- Send letter to parents.
- Assess the response and arrange follow-up. (Crisis Team)

(Source: Hanover County Public Schools, Ashland, VA)

Bus/Auto Accident on Trips Away From Division

Precautionary Measures Before Leaving District

- School buses, by law, are required to carry first aid kits. Check to see if it is in place.
- Take along in all automobiles a first aid kit on all field trips.
- Take along a list of students in attendance. Include for each a home telephone number, names of parents, parents' work telephone, home address, and any health or medical information.
- Take along a list of emergency phone numbers (listed below).
- Take along a list of chaperones and teachers who are in attendance on the trip, their home addresses and home phone numbers, name and work telephone of spouse or nearest relative and medical and health information on each.
- Follow School Board policy and administrative regulation on field trips.

In the Event of an Accident

- Remain calm
- If threat of fire exists, move children to safe place.
- Call emergency vehicles/services: police, fire, ambulance, highway patrol for locality and begin administration of first aid:

Telephone numbers

- Notify Director of Administration and Support _____
- Notify Director, Director of Pupil Transportation _____
- Notify Director of Community Relations (who will notify the Superintendent) _____
- Phone Principal _____
- Assistant Principal _____

Do not issue statements to the press. Refer press to the civil authorities in charge or to the Community Relations Director.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Chemical Spill

Inside the building

- Evacuate the area immediately.
- Check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)* to determine the urgency of the situation.
- Notify the building principal/supervisor/director as soon as possible.
- The building principal/supervisor/director will call the fire department if deemed necessary for consultation.
- Notify the Managing Director, Department of Facilities _____

*Lab file, principal's office, or custodian office _____

Outside the building

- Insure that all students are in the building and that they remain there.
- Shut off all outside air ventilators.
- If you are not alerted to the situation by division personnel, phone:
Environmental Health & Safety _____
Director of Facilities of Services _____
- Keep telephone lines clear for emergency calls only.
- Release students to parents or designee only.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Childnapping/Lost Child

Checklist

- Telephone police
- Call Superintendent's Office
- Notify parents of child
- Identify team to work on the crisis while rest of school maintains routine
- Obtain full description and pull out school picture
- Search school building and grounds
- If childnapping, try to obtain description of suspect
- When child is found, contact Superintendent, notify teacher, fill out Crisis Team Report
- Prepare memo to inform staff and parents of incident and actions taken
- Arrange for counseling for staff and students, if necessary
- Call emergency staff meeting

Specifics

1. Immediately after it has been determined that a child has been lost/taken, contact the Police.
2. Call the Superintendent's Office to report the incident.
3. Contact the parents of the child involved. Establish a communication plan with them, if necessary.
4. Identify a team to work on the crisis. Designate personnel to deal with phone communications, etc., and other administrative staff to assist as appropriate. If the incident occurs during the school day, classroom routine should be maintained.
5. Pull the school picture of the child and obtain a full description of the child (including clothing) to assist the police.
6. Conduct immediate search of school building and grounds.
7. In cases of childnapping, obtain from witnesses a description of the suspect.
8. When a child is found, contact the Superintendent's Office, notify teacher and fill out the Crisis Team Report.

9. Prepare a memo to staff outlining the situation. Give factual information, as appropriate, to allow them to respond to students' questions knowledgeably. Prepare an appropriate memo to parents.
10. If appropriate, arrange for counseling assistance for students and staff.
11. Call emergency staff meeting.

Preventative activities which may help avoid childnapping situations are as follows:

- School secretary should have at her desk a list of students who are not to be released to anyone except a particular parent or guardian.
- Emergency cards of such students should be tagged.
- Before releasing a child to anyone except a parent of guardian on the list, the school secretary should check with the custodial parent and/or guardian for approval; a record of the time and date of phone approval should be made and kept.
- When parent telephones a request that a child be released from school, the identity of the caller should be confirmed (by a separate call to the parent or guardian, if needed) before the child is permitted to leave. In the event of any doubt, the message and phone number should be written down; a return call should be made after cross-checking the phone number with those on file in the child's folder or on the emergency card.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Death

Death of a Student or Staff Member

- Contact Crisis Team members and have a team meeting as soon as possible.
- Notify Superintendent's Office
- Notify Community Relations Department
- Prepare a fact sheet giving accurate, up-to-date information.
- Hold a faculty meeting as soon as possible. Review the procedures for the day, availability of support services, referral process for at-risk students.
- Contact family of the deceased. Preferably an administrator and Crisis Team member should visit the family at their home and offer assistance.
- Hold a faculty meeting at the end of the day to review the day's events.
- Notify all bus drivers by written memo to be alert for students who show signs of emotional distress, along with a telephone number for drivers to use to reach a guidance counselor.
- Personal contact should be made with the driver of the bus which goes into the neighborhood of the student who has died. Supply a school staff member to ride the bus if that seems necessary.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Disaster

Destruction of Part/Whole of Building
(e.g., tornado, plane crash, bomb)

Checklist

- ___ Call 911.
- ___ Obtain information on extent of damage.
- ___ Evacuate using fire alarm or move students to safe areas in building.
- ___ Assign one adult to supervise others in attending to injured.
- ___ Assign staff member to assist rescue personnel.
- ___ Call Superintendent's Office and School Resource Officer.
- ___ Arrange for dismissal of students.
- ___ Handle all distribution of information to public through Public Information Office.
- ___ Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Call 911 for immediate help.
2. Damage: Inspect extent of damage and injuries.
3. Evacuation:
If there is no danger outside the building, use fire alarm to evacuate building.
Safe Areas: Identify areas away from problem area and route to be taken by classes in going to safe areas. Designate which classes/groups of students should go to which area.
4. Attend to Injured:
Assign free adults to attend to injured, with one adult designated as "in charge."
5. Meet Rescue Personnel:
 - Have staff members direct rescue personnel to problem area and assist in providing access as needed by rescue personnel.
 - Make Head Custodian available to assist rescue personnel.

6. Superintendent: Notify of plan being implemented.

7. Dismissal:

Arrange for dismissal with Superintendent's Office and Transportation. Elementary schools may have to follow emergency closing procedures for students and should inform Extended Day of plans for dismissal. Public Information Office should be notified of emergency closing so that radio and TV stations can be contacted.

8. Information:

- Consider briefly summarizing the situation for all students and adults prior to dismissal, by P.A. or preferably by informing teachers and having them explain to students.
- If time permits, prepare a written memo to parents detailing the situation and how it was handled, including plan for follow-up, to be sent home with students or distributed the following day.
- Call an emergency staff meeting after students leave to explain the situation and any plans for follow-up.
- Involve Public Information in all information being prepared and distributed and refer media and other calls from the general public to that office.

9. Call an emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Disaster

Danger from Outside Preventing Dismissal/Evacuation
(e.g., hurricane, tornado, sniper, plane crash)

Checklist

- ___ Gather information.
- ___ Identify safe areas in building.
- ___ Direct staff to escort students to identified areas.
- ___ Call Superintendent's Office and School Resource Officer.
- ___ When situation is "clear," return students to class.
- ___ Prepare memo/letters to inform staff and parents.
- ___ Distribute information to public via Public Information Office.
- ___ Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Information may be received from a variety of sources:

- telephone call
- Superintendent's Office
- radio or television
- visual observation

Ascertain specifics such as extent of immediate danger, possible length of time danger may exist.

2. Safe areas:

Consider large areas at the interior of the building away from numerous windows and outside walls which have a reliable source of lighting. Designate where students should go. Evacuate trailers to main building or safe area.

3. Move students:

Use the P.A., if working, or a system of notes sent by messengers, to inform teachers and other adults of the situation and where to bring students.

4. Superintendent:

Notify of plan being implemented; call police and maintain contact as necessary.

5. All “clear”

Monitor situation to ascertain when danger is removed; direct teachers and other adults to escort students back to class when situation is clear.

6. If crisis interferes with normal dismissal, arrange with Transportation and Superintendent’s Office to dismiss students following normal procedures. Elementary schools will want to inform Extended Day personnel in advance of dismissal.

7. Information:

< Consider briefly summarizing the danger and its resolution for all students prior to dismissal by P.A. or preferably by informing teachers and having them explain to students.

Consider preparing a written memo to parents detailing the situation and how it was handled to be sent home with students or distributing it the following day.

Prepare written memo to staff summarizing the situation and how it was handled.

8. Handle all distribution of information through the Public Information Office.

9. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Fighting

Violence Between Two or More Students

(Physical Fighting)

Goals:

- Safety
- Effective communication
- Mobilization
- Containment
- Assessment and follow-up

Prevention:

Have a clear operation plan and be familiar with that plan. Be alert to patterns of stress and agitation in students. Be familiar with information provided regarding managing a potentially dangerous person.

Intervention:

Intervening and managing physical altercations and/or fights require making a judgement call. There may be several goals at one time and individual circumstances will determine the priorities of your interventions.

Interventions may include:

- Disperse the crowd and ensure the safety of the students.
- Call for help and assistance in managing the incident.
- Focus on diffusing the fight.
- Attend to medical needs.
- Be knowledgeable about intervening with individuals who are dangerous. Refer to additional materials in Resource section.

Postvention:

- Assess the response and provide follow-up of situation. (Crisis Team)

(Source: Hanover County Public Schools)

Fire/Arson/Explosives

Checklist

- ___ Sound alarm; evacuate building.
- ___ Call 911.
- ___ Determine if there are any serious injuries.
- ___ Call: Superintendent
- ___ Public Information Office
- ___ Arrange transportation for dismissal.
- ___ Determine building status for return to classes.
- ___ Follow-up activities.
- ___ Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Sound alarm. Evacuate building if serious threat of danger. Prior arrangements should be made for the evacuation of any students or staff members requiring assistance.
2. Call 911 and ask for required emergency services.
3. If there are injuries, notify necessary rescue personnel. Provide first aid through school personnel, such as school nurse, nurse's aide, and athletic trainer.
4. Call Superintendent's Office and notify of incident and actions taken.
5. In all probability, school will have to be dismissed and arrangements for transportation will have to be made. Students and staff will have to be informed. A portable bull horn should be available to make announcements to students and staff who have evacuated the building.
6. If the building is damaged, several different steps may have to be taken. Severe damage may necessitate another location for classes which will have to be scheduled through the Superintendent's Office.
7. Prepare written memo for staff to advise of follow-up procedures. Send letter for parents home with students.
8. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Gas Leak

Natural gas leaks, with odor in the building, may occur and bring danger of explosion. Natural gas rises and will often be outside because most gas lines are outside the building. Natural gas is mixed with Mercaptan to give it odor. The gas goes up and the odor goes down.

If a leak is in or near the building:

Evacuate the building immediately, following your local building evacuation plan. Get students a safe distance from the building.

Turn off the main gas valve.

Location: _____

Phone Fire Department

Telephone Number: _____

Phone Facility Services

Telephone Number: _____

Phone Commonwealth Gas

Telephone Number: _____

If time permits, phone the Superintendent's Office to alert that office of the current situation. That office will notify the Community Relations Office.

Keep students at a safe distance until the problem has been corrected.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Hostage*

Armed/Dangerous Intruder

Checklist

- ___ Contact the police (911).
- ___ Instigate lockdown procedures; after police arrive, if the danger is confined, orderly evacuation away from the danger may occur.
- ___ Notify Superintendent.
- ___ When police arrive, in accordance with pre-planning, they assume control of incident and negotiations.
- ___ No school personnel should circulate through building; after evacuation, no individuals should enter or re-enter the building.
- ___ Instruct person answering the phone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
- ___ Keep telephone lines open for police use (pay telephones as well).
- ___ Provide information to police about the building layout and what is known about the background of the hostage-taking.

Specifics

1. Contact the Police:

Hostage-taking or endangering the safety of others are criminal offenses.

2. Secure All Classrooms (Lockdown):

The more closely contained the intruder can be kept, the less the danger there is to others and the easier it is for the police to apprehend the individual.

* See procedures in Section IV.

3. Notification:

- The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
- The Public Information Office will handle all media and community inquiries.
- After the crisis is over, the Public Information Office may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.

4. Staff to Keep Students in Present Areas:

Students should not be released for any reason until told to do so by the police.

5. No Personnel Circulating:

For the same reason as #4, all staff should be protected from involvement in the crisis where possible.

6. Telephone Answerer:

Prepare a statement to be read by the individuals who answer the telephones. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the telephone number for the caller to call.

7. Keep Phone Lines Open:

The police and other public safety personnel will need access to the phones with highest priority. Even the pay phones need to be available to the police.

8. Provide Police with Maps of Buildings and Grounds:

Involve those with greatest knowledge of the facilities such as head custodian. Also provide any anecdotal information about reasons for the hostage-taking, precipitating events, etc.

9. I. D. Persons Familiar with the Facility:

Persons familiar with the entire building should be available to discuss the interior room arrangements, etc. These individuals should be available at the chosen school map location away from the scene.

Intruder or Trespasser

Checklist

- _____ Determine the whereabouts of the intruder/trespasser.
- _____ Isolate the individual.
- _____ Determine the extent of the crisis.
- _____ Make reasonable notes for potential court case.
- _____ Contact police - 911.
- _____ Move other students and staff from area.
- _____ Notify superintendent.
- _____ Instruct person answering the telephone to direct all requests to Public Information Office.
- _____ Complete and submit police information for charges.
- _____ Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- _____ Complete Crisis Team Report.
- _____ Call emergency staff meeting.
- _____ Schedule follow-up activities for staff and students, including security plan review.

Specifics

1. Determine whereabouts of the intruder: Use school maps to assist police and staff members in locating intruder.
2. Isolate intruder from rest of building and students.
3. Determine extent of the crisis:

Trespass with no safety hazard may be dealt with through informing the intruder of the offense being committed. If trespasser refuses to leave, wait for police to arrest. If the trespasser has previously been warned (placed on notice) trespass charges may be filed without the arrest of the offender.

Trespass with threat to others' safety will require assistance from the police. Trespass charges should be filed.

4. Make notes. Recording what has occurred can provide information important to the police and in subsequent court cases.

5. Move other Students/Staff:

Staff may be asked to keep their students in certain areas, or to keep them out of certain areas. Staff should move students as quietly and quickly as possible when directed to do so.

6. Contact the Police:

Trespassing is a misdemeanor or felony, depending upon the location of the intrusion.

7. Notification:

- The Superintendent's Office should be contacted as soon as possible.
- The Public Information Office will handle media and community inquiries.
- Keep staff informed of actions. A Crisis Team, identified for the school, can effectively deliver information to other staff members so that the administrator's time can be used for other decisions/action.
- The Transportation Department can, in extreme emergencies, provide buses for early dismissal. The Transportation Department will notify the Superintendent of the need for this dismissal.
- The students will be able to deal with the situation by being informed of the facts, as soon as possible, rather than receiving their "facts" through rumor.
- Other schools should be given the basic information as soon as possible by the Public Information Office since siblings/neighbors will quickly learn of the situation.
- The parents of the students in the community will need to learn the real facts, just as their children have learned them, to reduce the rumor factor.
- After the crisis is over, the Public Information Office may wish to arrange a special press conference to give the media the same information that has been shared with the parents.

8. Telephone Answerer:

Prepare a statement for the individuals who answer the telephones to read. Instruct them that any further inquiries should be made to the Public Information Office. Give them the phone number for the caller to call.

9. Police Information for Charges:

The police will need to be sure of details from you as well as from others interviewed. Trespassing is a misdemeanor or felony, depending upon the location of the intrusion.

10. Written Memo for Staff and Parents:

As soon as the immediate crisis/danger is over., the staff and parents will need to know, not only what occurred, but why you took the action that you did.

11. Crisis Team Report

Submit it within twenty-four (24) hours.

12. Follow-Up Activities

Pupil Personnel Services will provide counseling for students and staff. The building security plan should also be reviewed.

13. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Life-Threatening Crisis

(Major) Life-threatening Injury to Individual

When a life-threatening situation is perceived to exist, a building administrator or person in charge of a building or office should:

First Actions

Call 911

Apply first aid and life-sustaining techniques using trained persons on staff.

Names: _____

Call parent/guardian immediately.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Perceived Crisis

Perceived crises are conditions or situations, often community-based, that are perceived as potentially affecting a large number of people. Examples of perceived crisis include racial events, school rivalry situations, events in which a group feels left out or not represented, introduction of new school procedures without adequate warning, real or perceived unsafe conditions such as toxic fumes or food poisoning, gang-related activities, or rumors about people with HIV/AIDS or other contagious conditions. **It is the task of those in charge to defuse any irrational response.**

Prevention:

- Identify situations in advance that may be perceived crises.
- Establish open lines of communication with students and staff.
- Develop a procedure for dealing with the public and the media.

Intervention:

- For any health condition, immediately contact the appropriate health authorities.
- Don't panic. Project a sense of calm and control.
- Gather detailed and accurate information about the perceived crisis.
- If necessary, call a team meeting to assess the situation and make decisions on what actions to take.
- Provide appropriate faculty, staff and those individuals or groups affected by the situation with specific information.
- Designate someone who would act as a single point of contact for controlling rumors. Keep lines of communication open; a feeling that secrets are being kept can increase the sense of crisis.
- Have trained individuals available to speak with small groups of students/staff.
- Take all actions that you have determined necessary to prevent a more serious situation from developing.

Postvention:

- Conduct stabilizing activities as soon as possible to project an atmosphere of normal conditions.
- Conduct follow-up and assessment activities with team members and other staff.

Poisoning

In the event of the poisoning or suspected poisoning of a student or an employee:

Immediate Actions:

- Call the rescue squad Telephone Number: _____
- Call the Poison Control Center Telephone Number: _____
- Administer first aid suggested by poison information center.

Preventative Measures:

- Post in the clinic information from Poison Control Center regarding emergency numbers.
- List in the clinic the names of building personnel who have special paramedic, first aid training, or other special life-saving or life-sustaining training.
- Provide staff information on possible poisonous materials in the building.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Power Failure / Lines Down

If there has been a power failure at a school, or if lines are reported down in the area of the school:

Power failure*

- Notify Virginia Power Telephone Number: _____
- Notify Maintenance Section Telephone Number: _____
- Notify Managing Director, Department of Facilities Telephone Number: _____

Lines down in area*

- Have an adult in the area of the downed lines to prevent children and other people from going near them.
- Notify Virginia Power Telephone Number: _____
- Notify Maintenance Section Telephone Number: _____

* *Note that telephone notification may require use of cellular phone, depending on whether telephone is set up to rely on electricity.*

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Rape

When a school is notified that a rape has occurred to a student or staff member, the Crisis Response Team and the school must protect the identify and right to privacy of the rape survivor and the alleged perpetrator. News of the incident should be contained as much as possible. Appropriate response by school staff will be directed at minimizing the fear of fellow students and quelling the spread of rumors. As opposed to convening a Crisis Response Team meeting and alerting the student body, services provided to the victim and her/his family should be kept confidential and should be coordinated with outside providers, such as a rape crisis team or hospital emergency room.

RAPE ONLY BECOMES A CRISIS TO BE MANAGED BY SCHOOL STAFF WHEN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXIST:

- A rape occurs on campus.
- A member of the rape survivor's family requests school intervention.
- The rape survivor's friends requests intervention.
- Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging.
- Students witness police action or emergency services response.

When one or more of the above conditions exists, the following should be implemented:

- Direct the person providing the information not to repeat it elsewhere in the school.
- If the rape occurred on campus, notify the appropriate law enforcement office and/or local rape crisis team.
- If office staff members heard the report, tell them not to repeat or give out any information within or outside school unless they are specifically told to do so.
- Designate the Crisis Response Team member closest to the victim to talk to her/him about the types of support he or she and the closest friends need, and the person(s) the rape survivor would like to provide that support.
- Provide space in the school for the rape survivor and identified peers to receive support services. Provide necessary passes to release these students from class to receive services.

Rape is a crime of violence. For the rape survivor, it often is an experience of fear, loss of control, humiliation, and violence. Rape survivors may experience a full range of emotional reactions. It is extremely beneficial for rape survivors to seek emotional support regarding the assault.

Monitor any school intervention in a rape incident with the following checklist:
(Source: California Association of School Administrators)

RAPE RESPONSE CHECKLIST

School involvement in incident due to:

- G Rape occurrence on campus
- G Survivor's family requests school intervention
- G Survivor's friends request intervention
- G Rumors and myths are widespread and damaging
- G Students witness police/emergency services
- G Information provider/recipients enjoined not to repeat information elsewhere.
- G Steps taken to protect survivor's identity and right to privacy.
- G Law enforcement and rape crisis agency notified if appropriate.
- G Crisis Response Team member closest to victim designated to talk with student and determine type of support and support provider desired.
- G Rape survivor encouraged to seek additional support from community rape crisis agency.
- G Space provided on site for rape survivor and identified peers to receive support services.
- G School services coordinated as appropriate and legal with outside service providers.
- G Action taken to quell rumors.
- G All records related to rape incident and services provided stored in confidential file.

Shootings/Wounds/Attacks

Checklist

- Assess the situation
- Call: 911
 - Police/School Resource Officer
 - Ambulance
- Use emergency signal - all students and staff are to stay in classrooms, secure the door, and stay on the floor.
- Establish a command post with several telephones available.
- Implement first aid procedures until rescue service arrives.
- Notify Superintendent's Office.
- Keep a written log of events.
- Prepare a written memo for staff and parents.
- Implement necessary follow-up activities.
- Call emergency staff meeting.

Specifics

1. Notify the police, and other necessary emergency staff.
2. Determine if the perpetrator is still on premises - determine number of victims and identify witnesses.
3. The emergency signal to staff and students should convey the seriousness of the situation. Follow-up announcements will be necessary to keep everyone informed. Prepare a general statement of the facts.
4. Establish a command post to handle the load of the Crisis Team and to direct the press and concerned members of the community to the Public Information Office.

5. Implement necessary first aid procedures through trained staff, school nurse, nurse's aide, physical education department, and/or athletic trainer. Direct rescue personnel to injured and give any required assistance. Designate staff member to accompany victim(s) in ambulance.
6. Contact Superintendent's Office.
7. Identify a place where a log of events is to be kept. Record all significant events, actions, and individuals that are involved.
8. Keep staff informed through a memo or emergency staff meeting. Parents may be informed through a letter sent home with students.
9. Follow-up management should be well-delegated. Crisis counseling for students and staff may be needed, and security concerns should be considered. All staff will assist in restoring building to normal state. Reopen school as soon as possible.
10. Call emergency staff meeting.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Suicide

The school's general response to a suicide does not differ markedly from a response to any sudden death crisis. However, some issues exclusive to suicide require specific attention.

School administrators must allow students to grieve the loss of a peer without glorifying the method of death. Overemphasis of a suicide may be interpreted by vulnerable students as a glamorization of the suicidal act, which can assign legendary or idolized status to taking one's own life. The following "DOs" and "DON'Ts" will help school staff limit glamorization of suicide:

Do acknowledge the suicide as a tragic loss of life.

Do allow students to attend funeral services.

Do provide support for students profoundly affected by the death.

Do not organize school assemblies to honor the deceased student.

Do not dedicate the yearbook or yearbook pages, newspaper articles, proms, athletic events, or advertisements to the deceased individual.

Do not pay tribute to a suicidal act by planting trees, hanging engraved plaques, or holding other memorial activities.

WARNING:

A suicide in the school community can heighten the likelihood, in the subsequent weeks, of "copycat" suicide attempts and threats among those especially vulnerable to the effects of a suicide. To prevent further tragedies, students considered to be especially susceptible to depression/suicide must be carefully monitored and appropriate action taken if they are identified as high risk. These efforts require a limited, rather than school wide, response.

Suicide Threats

Crisis Intervention Procedures for Potentially Suicidal Students

Referral

Go to Member of Crisis Team

Students at risk can self-refer or be referred to the crisis team by school staff, parent, friend, neighbor, or other person from the community. Students at risk range from those talking of hopelessness, to those writing poems with suicidal intent, to students telling someone of planning to harm themselves. Team members might include principals, psychologists, counselors, teachers, social workers, and nurses. The team member receiving the referral should gather pertinent information from the referral source before contacting other team members.

Team Consult

Designate Case Manager, Gather Information

When possible, the available team members gather to designate a case manager, considering the following factors: 1) existing relationship with the student, 2) time and coverage constraints, 3) seriousness of the problem, 4) experience of the members. The team or case manager reviews the student's records and gathers information from staff who know the student.

Crisis Interview

Conduct Interview

The case manager interviews the student on the day of the referral. The case manager determines the extent of suicidal thinking, the potential plan of suicide, the lethality of the plan, and the history of the student's suicidal thinking and attempts. For severe cases, insure the safety of the student through adult supervision.

Team Review

Team Members Decide Plan

The case manager returns as soon as possible to the available team members to discuss the case and formulate a plan of action. Depending on the seriousness of the case, the team may wish to consult with other members not initially involved or discuss case with Jefferson County Mental Health. Plans formulated by the team might range from no further involvement, to monitoring by a specific staff member, to referral for counseling within the school setting, to asking the parents to take immediate action with their child.

Outside Contacts

Parents Notified

Parents of all interviewed students will be contacted by the case manager on the same day of referral and interview. Parents will be told of the reason for referral, the outcome of the interview, and the plans formulated by the team. When the suicide potential is significant, the case manager needs to ascertain that the parents accept responsibility to follow through with the team's recommendations. If the student is dangerous to self and the parents cannot be located, then the case manager contacts the Crisis Intervention Unit of Jefferson County Mental Health. In extremely dangerous situations, the police may be called first to ensure the safety of the student. Follow-up remains the responsibility of the case manager unless explicitly agreed to by other staff members. The case manager documents the case and shares information with other team members.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Vandalism

- Report all acts of vandalism to police.
- Photograph any willful and malicious destruction of school property (e.g., graffiti, broken windows, etc.).
- For minor damage, simply note the time, date, and type of damage for your records.
- Serious acts of vandalism may be hate crimes or gang-related.
- Clean up and repair the damage as soon as possible to avoid encouraging future acts of vandalism.
- Aggressively prosecute all vandals to convey that you will not tolerate this type of offense.
- Collect restitution by having the offender pay money or provide labor to clean and/or repair the damage he or she has caused.

(Adapted from Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners)

Weapons Situation

Checklist

- _____ Assess the situation.
- _____ Notify police.
- _____ Gather information.
- _____ Isolate individual or suspect.
- _____ Do not use force or touch the person or weapon.
- _____ Remain calm.
- _____ Tell another administrator what the situation is.
- _____ Use emergency signal to notify teachers of the threatening situation and have teachers keep students in classroom until all is clear.
- _____ Notify Superintendent.
- _____ Refer media questions to the Director of Community Relations
- _____ After immediate situation is resolved, hold emergency staff meeting before staff members leave for the day.

Specifics

1. Assess the situation.
2. Notify police. Provide as much information as possible. Be prepared to act as a resource and liaison between school and police. If necessary, have a map of the school available for police.
3. Gather as much detailed information as possible. Try to determine:
 - Location, identity and detailed description of individual.
 - Location and description of weapon.
 - Any pertinent background information on individual, including possible reason for carrying a weapon.
4. Isolate individual or suspect. (If weapon is in a locker or elsewhere, prevent access to it.)
5. Confer with police when they arrive. They will advise you how they intend to proceed.

6. If interaction with the individual is imminent, do not use force or touch the person or weapon. Avoid sudden moves or gestures.
7. Remain calm. Try not to raise your voice -- but, if this becomes necessary, do so decisively and with clarity. Your tone and demeanor will strongly influence the outcome of the crisis.
8. Be certain that at least one other administrator (or designee) is aware of the situation, but limit information to staff and students on a need to know basis.
9. Notify Superintendent.
10. Use emergency signal to notify teachers of the threatening situation and have teachers keep students in classroom until all is clear.
11. Refer media questions to the Director of Community Relations.
12. Call emergency staff meeting. It is important that staff members leave with accurate information about the incident and subsequent actions to be taken.

(Source: Henrico County Public Schools)

Handling a Weapon-Wielding Student

- Evacuate the area
- Evaluate the perpetrator
- Isolate
- Negotiate
- Remain calm
- Get help
- Avoid heroics
- Don't threaten
- Keep a safe, nonintimidating distance
- Avoid abrupt sporadic movements
- Look for a place to dive or jump
- Report incident to law enforcement

(Adapted from National School Safety Center, 1995)

Weather

Tornado, Inclement Weather, Earthquake

Goals:

- Safety
- Effective communications
- Mobilization
- Containment
- Assessment and follow-up

Prevention:

- Post and practice mobilization plan.

Definitions:

Severe Weather **Watch**: Forecast of severe weather in area; normal activities continue; no school-wide announcement; principal or designee monitor the situation.

Severe Weather **Warning**: Severe and dangerous weather situation approaching. Be prepared.

Intervention:

1. Principal alerts staff of impending situation. Call emergency numbers as needed; call superintendent. (principal or designee)
2. Evacuate classrooms according to plan; provide for handicapped.
3. Move students quickly and quietly to designated area, underground shelter if available or interior hallways on first floor. Avoid windows, auditoriums, gyms, and any wide span or overhead structure. North and east walls are preferable to south and west walls. Sit in fetal position with face and head protected. Review “drop and tuck” command.
4. Get word to all students and staff who are outside or who are in out-lying buildings.
5. Check for and provide care for injured.
6. Secure tool box. (designated duty)
7. Account for all students/staff/others.
8. Determine status for safe return to classes or dismissal. (principal or designee)

Postvention:

- Assess the response and prepare follow-up of situation. (Crisis Team)
(Source: Hanover County Public Schools)

VIII. EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

UTILITY CONTACT NUMBERS

<u>Code</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Daytime #</u>	<u>24-Hour Line</u>
Electric			
V CRT	Virginia Power No. VA. Electric Co-op	_____	_____
Gas / Propane			
CP WG CG	Columbia Propane Washington Propane Columbia Gas	_____	_____
Water / Sewer			
PWCAPWC VA DALE CM CMP	Service Authority Virginia American Dale Service City of Manassas City of Manassas Park	_____	_____

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>ELEC.</u>	<u>WATER</u>	<u>SEWER</u>	<u>TELEPHONE</u>	<u>FUEL/GAS/PROPANE</u>
Ann Ludwig	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	
Antietam	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	WG
Bel Air	V	V.A.	DALE	GTE & AT&T	
Belmont	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	CG
Bennett	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	WG
Beville	CRT	V.A.	DALE	GTE & AT&T	#2 & CP
Brentsville	V	Well	PWSA	GTE & AT&T & BELL	WG
Bristow Run	CRT	PWSA	PWSA	GTE	WG
Coles	CRT	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	CP
Dale City	CRT	V.A.	DALE	GTE & AT&T	CG
Dumfries	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	CP
Enterprise	CRT	V.A.	DALE	GTE & AT&T	WG
Featherstone	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T	WG
Fred Luynn	V	PWSA	PWSA	GTE & AT&T & BELL	WG
Gar-Field	CRT	V.A.	DALE	GTE & AT&T & BELL	

(Source: Department of Risk Management and Security, Prince William County Public Schools)

JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD/CENTRAL OFFICE/MANAGEMENT/TRANSPORTATION/PHONE NUMBERS

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	CELL PHONE #	PAGER #	HOME #	TITLE
					BOARD MEMBER
					ADMIN SECRETARY
					PUBLIC INFORMATION
					DIRECTOR FINANCE
					ADMIN SECRETARY
					COORDINATOR
					BOARD CHAIRMAN
					COORDINATOR/PERSONNEL
					COORDINATOR/PUPIL PERSONNEL
					COORDINATOR/TRANSPORTATION
					FACILITIES ASS'T/WHSE
					ASST. SUPERINTENDENT
					BOARD VICE-CHAIRMAN
					ASST. SUPERINTENDENT
					SECRETARY TO SUPT.
					BOARD MEMBER
					BOARD MEMBER
					BOARD MEMBER
					DIRECTOR/FACILITIES & PLAN
					SUPERINTENDENT
					BOARD MEMBER

(Source: Suffolk City Public Schools, Suffolk, VA)

Section VIII - Emergency Telephone Numbers

**COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS TEAM
1999-2000**

Position/Name	Work Phone	Home Phone	Cell Phone/Beeper
Principal	_____	_____	_____
*Ass't Principal	_____	_____	_____
*Ass't Principal/ Team Coordinator	_____	_____	_____
*Guidance Director	_____	_____	_____
School Nurse	_____	_____	_____
School Resource Officer	_____	_____	_____
School Psychologist	_____	_____	_____
School Social Worker	_____	_____	_____
Secretary	_____	_____	_____
Teacher/Administrator/ Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Teacher/Administrator/ Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Custodian/ Maintenance	_____	_____	_____

* Designated back-up person(s) in the absence of the Principal and Team Coordinator

IX. SCHOOL BUILDING AND VICINITY MAPS

[Paste map here]

[Paste map here]

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE STATEMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Letter to Parent Regarding Procedures for Picking Up Children in a Crisis

(To be mailed to parents at the beginning of each school year)

SUGGESTED LETTER FORMAT:

In a letter to parents, mailed in September of each year, the school will inform parents as to the proper procedures to follow in picking up a child/children in a crisis situation, such as tornado, chemical spill, or other crisis.

Among the types of information that will be contained in the letter are:

Specifications indicating that school is one of the safest places that students may be located during most crises or natural disasters.

Instructions showing that students will be kept at school until the crisis is determined to be over.

Instructions emphasizing that students will be released to parents who come get them.

Instructions **NOT** to phone the school and tie-up the few telephone lines that will be needed for emergency use.

Instructions emphasizing that when a person other than the parent comes to get a student, the building administrator will first check with the student and that a record is kept as to the person picking up the student; if there is any doubt that a parent does not want the student released, then the student will be kept at school.

“Tips for Parents to Help Create Safe Schools” will be included in the mailing to parents. This will take place no later than the second week of school.

Authorization to Release Children in an Emergency

Our school has developed an emergency business plan in case of any disaster which might occur. This is done in compliance with the division policy. The emergency plan is devoted to the welfare and safety of your child during school hours. The plan is available for inspection in the school office.

We are requesting your assistance at this time:

Should there be an emergency, such as a major fire, tornado, explosion, etc., your child may be required to remain in the care of the school until it is deemed safe by an Emergency Services authority that the child can be released. At that point, children may be released only to properly authorized parents and/or designees. Therefore, please list as many names, (with local telephone numbers and addresses) as possible, of those persons to whom you would allow your child's release in the event of an emergency. Be sure to notify those persons listed that you have authorized their supervision in case of emergency.

In the event that you should be unable to come to school, it is essential that others be designated to care for your child. No child will be released to the care of unauthorized persons.

We appreciate your cooperation in this important matter.

Child: _____ **Teacher:** _____ **School Year:** _____

Please release my child to any of the persons listed below:

Name	Phone	Address	Relationship
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Parent/Guardian: _____ **Date:** _____
Signature

Home Phone: _____ **Work Phone:** _____

(Source: Colonial Heights Public Schools, Colonial Heights, VA)

Tips for Parents to Help Create Safe Schools

Parents can help create safe schools. Here are some ideas that parents in other communities have tried:

- Discuss the school's discipline policy with your child. Show your support for the rules, and help your child understand the reasons for them.
- Involve your child in setting rules for appropriate behavior at home.
- Talk with your child about the violence he or she sees--on television, in video games, and possibly in the neighborhood. Help your child understand the consequences of violence.
- Teach your child how to solve problems. Praise your child when he or she follows through.
- Help your child find ways to show anger that do not involve verbally or physically hurting others. When you get angry, use it as an opportunity to model these appropriate responses for your child-and talk about it.
- Help your child understand the value of accepting individual differences.
- Note any disturbing behaviors in your child. For example, frequent angry outbursts, excessive fighting and bullying of other children, cruelty to animals, fire setting, frequent behavior problems at school and in the neighborhood, lack of friends, and alcohol or drug use can be signs of serious problems. Get help for your child. Talk with a trusted professional in your child's school or in the community.
- Keep lines of communication open with your child--even when it is tough. Encourage your child always to let you know where and with whom he or she will be. Get to know your child's friends.
- Listen to your child if he or she shares concerns about friends who may be exhibiting troubling behaviors. Share this information with a trusted professional, such as the school psychologist, principal, or teacher.

- Be involved in your child's school life by supporting and reviewing homework, talking with his or her teacher(s), and attending school functions such as parent conferences, class programs, open houses, and PTA meetings.
- Work with your child's school to make it more responsive to all students and to all families. Share your ideas about how the school can encourage family involvement, welcome all families, and include them in meaningful ways in their children's education.
- Volunteer to work with school-based and community groups concerned with violence prevention.
- Talk with the parents of your child's friends. Discuss how you can form a team to ensure your children's safety.
- Find out if your employer offers provisions for parents to participate in school activities.

(Source: *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide for Safe Schools.*)

ACTION STEPS FOR STUDENTS

There is much students can do to help create safe schools. Talk to your teachers, parents, and counselor to find out how you can get involved and do your part to make your school safe. Here are some ideas that students in other schools have tried:

- Listen to your friends if they share troubling feelings or thoughts. Encourage them to get help from a trusted adult--such as a school psychologist, counselor, social worker, leader from the faith community, or other professional. If you are very concerned, seek help for them. Share your concerns with your parents.
- Create, join, or support student organizations that combat violence, such as “Students Against Destructive Decisions” and “Young Heroes Program.”
- Work with local businesses and community groups to organize youth-oriented activities that help young people think of ways to prevent school and community violence. Share your ideas for how these community groups and businesses can support your efforts.
- Organize an assembly and invite your school psychologist, school social worker, and counselor--in addition to student panelists--to share ideas about how to deal with violence, intimidation, and bullying.
- Get involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating your school's violence prevention and response plan
- Participate in violence prevention programs such as peer mediation and conflict resolution. Employ your new skills in other settings, such as the home, neighborhood, and community.
- Work with your teachers and administrators to create a safe process for reporting threats, intimidation, weapon possession, drug selling, gang activity, graffiti, and vandalism. Use the process.

- Ask for permission to invite a law enforcement officer to your school to conduct a safety audit and share safety tips, such as traveling in groups and avoiding areas known to be unsafe. Share your ideas with the officer.
- Help to develop and participate in activities that promote student understanding of differences and that respect the rights of all.
- Volunteer to be a mentor for younger students and/or provide tutoring to your peers
- Know your school's code of conduct and model responsible behavior. Avoid being part of a crowd when fights break out. Refrain from teasing, bullying, and intimidating peers.
- Be a role model — take personal responsibility by reacting to anger without physically or verbally harming others.
- Seek help from your parents or a trusted adult — such as a school psychologist, social worker, counselor, teacher — if you are experiencing intense feelings of anger, fear, anxiety, or depression.

(Source: *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide for Safe Schools.*)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Initial Announcement of Crisis Event

TO:
FROM:

“We have just been advised of a tragedy involving a member(s) of our school. I am sad to announce that _____ has died/has been in a serious accident. As soon as we have more information, we will pass it on to you. People will be available in the building to help those of you who need extra support in dealing with this situation. Your teachers will advise you of the location and times available for this support.”

“As soon as we know the family’s/families’ wishes regarding _____ we will share that information with you. We ask that all students remain in their classrooms and adhere to their regular schedules.”

(Source: Association of California School Administrators)

Student Suicide

To be read to the students by the classroom teacher.

TO: School Faculty
FROM: Principal
SUBJECT: (Crisis)
DATE:

John Doe committed suicide early Saturday morning. As a faculty we extend our sympathy to John's family and friends.

We encourage all students to consider the tragic nature of this death and to realize that death is final. John's death is a reminder to us all that the act of taking one's life is not an appropriate solution to any of life's problems nor is it an act of courage. Please let your teachers know if you would like to talk to a counselor or other staff member.

Funeral services for John will be held in _____ and there will not be a memorial service in this area. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to _____ (name and address).

(Source: Washington County Public Schools)

Student Death from Accident or Illness of Which Students May Be Aware

As many of you are aware, we were sorry to hear that _____, a student in the 11th grade of our school, died on _____ from injuries in a car crash. The funeral arrangements have not been completed. As soon as we learn the funeral plans, we will announce them. Those of you who want to discuss your feeling's about _____'s death should obtain a pass from your teacher to go to the library. This help will be available throughout the school day. Let us have a moment of silence. . . Thank you for your cooperation today.

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools)

LETTERS TO PARENTS

Unexpected Student Death - Elementary

Dear Parents,

Yesterday, we learned that one of our first graders, _____, died while in the hospital. _____ had his tonsils removed over the past weekend. Complications set in after his parents took him home when he died yesterday afternoon.

Today, at school, each teacher read a short message about _____ to his/her class. We discussed what happened and how _____ died. We also stressed that many people have their tonsils out every day and have no problems with it. Our guidance counselor and our school psychologist were available throughout the day to talk with any student that may have had a particularly difficult time dealing with the news.

Any death is difficult for children to understand. _____'s death is particularly difficult due to his young age and its unexpectedness. The fact that _____ died while at the hospital and the fact that it was related to having his tonsils out may also be frightening for children, especially those who may need to have their own tonsils out in the future.

We recommend that you take some time to discuss _____ death with your child. We suggest allowing your child to talk about how he/she feels and any fears or concerns he/she may have as a result of hearing this news. We are enclosing a list of suggestions to help you talk with your child about _____'s death and/or the death of any loved one.

If you feel that your child would benefit from talking with our guidance counselor or our school psychologist, please call us at the school and share your concerns.

The faculty, staff and students extend our heartfelt sympathies to the _____ family and to all their friends. We at the school will miss _____ very much. He was our friend and we loved him.

Sincerely,

School Principal

(Adapted from letter developed by Chesapeake Public Schools)

LETTERS TO PARENTS

Notice of Bus Accident

Dear Parents,

This morning, prior to school, there was an accident involving a school bus and an automobile. There were known injuries to the passengers of the car. The children on Bus # ____ witnessed the aftermath of the accident but were not involved in it.

The children from the bus involved in the accident were taken to the library by the guidance counselors and administration. The children were asked if they were injured in any way and their parents were then contacted. Your child, because of being on Bus # ____ may show delayed reaction to the accident. Please be alert over the next several days to symptoms of delayed reaction, including:

- ! a desire to be alone, unusually quiet
- ! loss of appetite
- ! problems with sleeping, nightmares
- ! difficulty with concentration
- ! crying
- ! angry outburst, short temper
- ! headaches, upset stomach
- ! depressed, sad

Your child may also exhibit some physical complaints. Please contact (principal's name) to fill out an accident report. The school will be offered support services for students needing help dealing with the accident. We will also provide counseling services to parents in helping their children to cope. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Principal of School

(Adapted from letters developed by Chesapeake and Hanover County Public Schools)

Sample Joint Letter to Parents about Crisis
(i.e., shooting or other violent acts)

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

Dear Parents:

The tragic event of (date) has hurt/affected the entire (school) community. This unfortunate incident shows us we must band together as parents, seek positive solutions to problems which victimize us.

It is for this reason I'm asking ALL parents to join me in a special meeting (day, date, time) in the school auditorium. We will learn the steps the administration is taking to ensure the welfare and safety of our children; we will discuss what we, as parents, can do to assist our children and school staff.

There will be representatives from the school staff, Jefferson County Public Schools administration, Jefferson County Police Department, guidance office, and the presidents of the community civic league to address ALL our concerns.

Bus transportation will be provided for the (area) families. (Here include the place and time of bus pickups)

Child care will be provided at the school for your convenience.

Refreshments will be served at the end of the meeting.

If you would like further information about this meeting, contact (telephone).

Cordially,

President, Civic League

Principal

(Source: Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk, VA)

Sample Thank You Letter

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

Dear Faculty and Staff Members:

We would like to thank you for your support during the recent crisis at our school. Your professionalism and dedication were evident as we all worked to quiet and soothe scared students and allay their fears while still tending to instructional responsibilities.

We know that this has been an extremely difficult time for you as well as the students. Without your courage and concern, our school could not possibly have come through this crisis as well as we did.

Thank you once again. Your expertise and commitment have enabled all of us to work together as a team and overcome this tragic situation.

Sincerely,

Principal

Guidance Chair

(Source: Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk, VA)

Sample Letter — Student Sudden Death

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

Date

Dear Students and Parents:

On Friday, John Doe, a fifth grade student at _____ School was in a terrible accident. Apparently, John was hit by a car that was speeding and had crossed over the median strip to the wrong side of the road. John died instantly.

John's death is a tragic, emotional loss for the entire School family. I am sure all of us will make every effort to comfort and support John's family as they attempt to deal with this traumatic loss. There are no adequate words to express our sense of grief and sympathy for the family.

Because John's death is felt so deeply by so many, on Monday and thereafter as needed, we will bring in our crisis team to discuss this accident and loss with students and faculty.

We encourage each of you to discuss this loss with your child. In order to help you do so we are holding a parent meeting on **date, and time**, in the cafeteria of _____ School. The topic will be ways to help children cope with loss and will be presented by _____, a local mental health professional.

John's family, friends, and the school are suffering deeply. Please join us in supporting John's family.

Sincerely,

Principal

(School)

(Source: Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk, VA)

APPENDIX B: PLANNING SURVEYS AND CHECKLISTS

Staff Skills Inventory
(To be conducted annually)

Name _____ Room # _____

Please check any of the following in which you have expertise or training:

Emergency response:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First aid | <input type="checkbox"/> Search and Rescue | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CPR | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement Source | <input type="checkbox"/> CISD (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EMT | <input type="checkbox"/> CB Radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Ham Radio | _____ |
| | | _____ |

Mobile or Cellular Phone which could be used in an emergency

Phone number: _____

Bi/multilingual Language(s): _____

Survey of Students/staff Who Need Special Assistance in Evacuation
(To be conducted each semester)

Name	Grade/Location	Type of Assistance Needed
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

REQUIRED REPORT

Crisis Response Team Report to Superintendent

(Due within 5 days of incident)

School _____ Date of Report _____

Description of incident (include date, time, place):

Immediate actions by Crisis Response Team:

Describe assistance provided by Emergency Services:

Describe assistance provided by other community agencies/organizations:

Follow-up which has occurred/is occurring:

With students:

With faculty/staff:

With parent(s)/guardian(s) of student(s) involved:

With community:

Recommendations to improve responses to such crises in the future:

Principal Signature

Date

* Attach a list of students directly involved in the incident including their grade levels and parents' names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Evaluation of Crisis Response Team Intervention

The Crisis Response Team (CRT), consisting of both the school guidance staff and the area school student services staff, seeks your input to help us assess the effectiveness of the intervention during the recent crisis at your school. We would appreciate your taking a few minutes of your time to complete this form as soon as possible and return it to the Crisis Response Team Coordinator.

Please indicate with an "X" the response which most closely reflects your evaluation of the following:

1. Speed of CRT's response to the crisis:

_____ _____ _____ _____
very delayed adequate very timely

2. Comprehensiveness of CRT's response:

_____ _____ _____ _____
very limited adequate exceptional

3. Effectiveness of team's responses in meeting students' needs:

_____ _____ _____ _____
not helpful adequate very helpful

4. Assistance to teachers in the classroom:

_____ _____ _____ _____
not supportive adequate very supportive

5. Quality of communication with the school faculty and staff:

_____ _____ _____ _____
not informative adequate very explanatory

6. Support and guidance to individual teachers and staff:

_____ _____ _____ _____
ineffectual adequate very empathic

7. Assistance to the administrative staff:

_____ _____ _____ _____
limited adequate comprehensive

8. Amount of time allocated for intervention:

_____ _____ _____ _____
insufficient adequate very sufficient

Appendix B: Planning Surveys and Checklists

9. Support to families in need:

_____ lacking _____ adequate _____ outstanding

10. Communication of information to parents:

_____ minimal _____ adequate _____ thorough

II. Please circle the adjectives which best describe the students' reactions to the CRT's intervention:

satisfied	positive
angry	negative
ambivalent	receptive
grateful	hostile
relieved	apathetic

III. Please describe any significant reactions the students had to the CRT intervention which should be considered in future interventions.

IV. Please comment on any aspects of the intervention you found particularly helpful or areas which you think should be modified.

School _____

Signature (optional) _____

Return to: Crisis Response Team Coordinator

(Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, VA)

APPENDIX C: TRAINING AND DRILLS TO MAINTAIN PREPAREDNESS

Sample Agenda for School All-Staff Inservice

- I. Introductory background on development of School Crisis Management Plan

- II. School Crisis Management Plan
 - A. Purpose of Plan
 - B. Overview of Plan
 - C. General review of roles and responsibilities

- III. Typical impacts of crises
 - A. Shock; stages of grief
 - B. Restoring equilibrium
 - 1. Importance of first 48 hrs.
 - 2. Postvention

- IV. Critical incident management
 - A. What are “critical incidents?”
 - B. Coordination with emergency services

- V. Communications
 - A. Confidentiality
 - B. Rumor-control within the school
 - C. Communication outside school
 - 1. With media
 - 2. With parents and community groups

VI. Dealing with specific types of crises

- A. Review of general procedures in the case of the expected death of a student or faculty member.

Practice scenario

- B. Review of general procedures in the case of accidental death

Practice scenario

- C. Review of general procedures in the case of a suicide

Practice scenario

- D. Review of general procedures in the case of homicide

Practice scenario

- E. Review of general procedures in the case of bus accident with injuries

Practice scenario

- F. Review of general procedures in a case of armed intruder in the school

Practice scenario

- G. Review of general procedures in case of natural disaster

Practice scenario

- H. Select additional incidents/scenario appropriate to the school

Closing discussion and questions

Scenarios for Use in Training

For each scenario, identify key issues and formulate a preliminary action plan.

A seven year old boy playing near a stairwell falls two stories inside the school. Classmates witness it. The child, seriously injured, is taken to the hospital by paramedics. Students are scheduled to be dismissed in 20 minutes.

A 12th grade student driving home after a football game one Friday night fails to stop at an intersection and the accident results in the death of a classmate's mother. It is rumored that the boy was drinking.

A student at your school has contracted meningitis and is hospitalized in critical condition. Health Department authorities have initiated procedures for immunization of classmates. There are untrue rumors that a cafeteria worker who coincidentally was hospitalized the same day is a carrier.

A parent who has brought her child to school reports to the office that a house in the neighborhood caught fire early that morning and there were fatalities but she does not know who. The house is that of two students at the school.

A bus carrying elementary students home one afternoon stops at an intersection where students looking out the bus see a young male shot in a drive-by shooting. The young man is a cousin of a student on the bus.

It is a rainy Tuesday morning and, nearby, a truck has overturned releasing toxic fumes. The Fire Department has just ordered that your 600-student elementary school be evacuated immediately.

You hear on the 11 PM news on a Sunday night that a 10th grade girl at your school is reported missing; she was not home when parents came home from a weekend trip. Minutes after the broadcast a staff member calls and reports that there are rumors that foul play is suspected. You know that she and her boyfriend who is a senior had a loud fight in front of many students on Friday afternoon as buses were loading.

You are notified by police at 5:30 AM that a very popular teacher at your middle school commits suicide, leaving behind a husband and two children, one of whom attends your school.

At a basketball tournament in a nearby city a member of the team collapses. Because of media coverage of the tournament, information about the incident is already being broadcast. The school has just been notified that the student died, but the family has not yet been reached. Students, including the student's sister, who have heard it on the radio are coming to the office to ask what has happened.

You have just received a call from central office that there is a tornado warning for the part of the county in which your middle school is located. There are 10 portable classrooms; 2 classes in the gymnasium, 1 class coming off the baseball field, and busload of 5th graders arriving from the feeder school for an orientation visit.

Planning Steps for School Crisis Drills

1. Utilize a paper and pencil activity where the crisis team is presented with five possible crisis situations and each team member records their hypothetical response.
2. Team members discuss their anticipated responses and select one scenario to simulate each semester with precautions taken to not unduly alarm staff and students.
3. It is important to inform the public of the need for crisis planning and the conduction of drills.
4. Avoid the use of dramatic props such as starter pistols and simulated blood.
5. Place a sign in the area where drills are to be conducted clearly designating that a drill is taking place and let all relevant agencies know in advance that it is a drill.
6. Practice drills that do involve moving staff and students to a safe location.
7. An objective staff member from another building of the central office should observe the drill and give feedback to the crisis team.
8. The crisis team should meet and review their activities with the emphasis placed on continual improvement.

(Source: Poland, 1994)

Model Training Topics for Crisis Response Team

I. Introduction

II. Development of school-site Crisis Management Plan

A. Managing crisis

1. Preparation - before it happens
2. Crisis response - when it happens
3. Follow-up - postvention
4. Delegating

B. Communications

1. Rumor-control within the school
2. Media procedures
3. Communication with parents and community

C. Managing grief and loss

1. Stages of grief
2. First 48 hrs.
3. Memorials, anniversaries planning

D. Legal issues

1. *In loco parentis*
2. Confidentiality
3. Negligence/liability issues

E. Taking care of caretakers

1. Helping staff personally manage crisis
2. Self-care for team members

F. Community support and referrals

1. Identifying community support resources
2. Establishing and maintaining community linkages

III. Crisis Responses

A. Suicide

1. Review of crisis response for suicide
2. Prevention of “epidemic”
 - a. Myths and facts; warning signs
 - b. Identifying those at-risk
 - c. Procedure for intervention with potentially suicidal student
3. Follow-up activities

B. Other deaths - Review of crisis response and follow-up for each

1. Accidental/sudden death of student or staff member
2. Homicide
3. Anticipated death (following illness, declining health)

C. Critical incidents at school - shooting, stabbing, weapons, intruder.

1. Review of crisis responses for each
2. Interface with local law enforcement
3. Review of possible follow-up activities

D. Critical incidents (not at school) - rape, arrests, accidents, hate crimes or racial tensions

1. Review of crisis responses
2. Communication with involved authorities
3. Review of possible follow-up activities

E. Natural disaster - Floods, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes

1. Review of crisis responses for each
2. Interface with local disaster relief agencies.
3. Review of possible follow-up activities

IV. Community Support Services

A. Emergency Assistance

1. Police
2. Fire/Rescue
3. Medical services
4. Mental health
5. Shelter/housing
6. Food/clothing
7. Child protective services
8. Emergency Family Services
9. Disaster relief

B. Counseling Services (nonprofit and community agencies)

C. Health Services/Clinics

1. Medical and dental
2. Substance abuse and Psychiatric

D. Hotlines

1. Crisis
2. Suicide
3. Rape
4. Child abuse (including sexual abuse)
5. Crime
6. Other community hotlines

E. Self-help

1. Alcoholics Anonymous
2. Ala-Anon/Alateen
3. Parent support
4. Other self-help

F. Bilingual/Refugee Resources

1. Translators
2. Programs/agencies

APPENDIX D: INFORMATIONAL HANDOUTS

Possible Classroom Activities after a Loss

Supporting others

- Discussing and preparing for funeral (what to expect, people's reactions, what to do, what to say)
- Encouraging mutual support
- Discussing ways to cope with traumatic situations
- Discussing the stages of grief
- Encouraging students to keep a journal of events and of their reactions, especially in an ongoing situation

Honoring the deceased

- Writing a eulogy
- Writing stories about the victim
- Placing a collection box in school for notes to the family
- Designing a yearbook page commemorating the deceased
- Composing and practicing a song in memory of the deceased
- Supporting a cause the deceased supported.
- Collecting and displaying memorabilia
- Planting a tree, building a sculpture or painting a mural
- Starting a new school activity such as a SAID unit if a child was killed by a drunk driver

Learning activities

- Writing a reaction paper
- Discussing historical precedents about issues related to crisis
- Writing a "where I was when it happened" report
- Investigating laws governing similar incidents
- Conducting a mock trial if laws were broken
- Debating controversial issues
- Read books about loss

SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET TO SHARE WITH PARENTS

Helping Your Child After a Disaster

Children may be especially upset and express feelings about the disaster. These reactions are normal and usually will not last long. Listed below are some problems you may see in your child:

- Excessive fear of darkness, separation, or being alone;
- Clinging to parents, fear of strangers;
- Worry;
- Increase in immature behaviors;
- Not wanting to go to school;
- Changes in eating/sleeping behaviors;
- Increase in either aggressive behavior or shyness;
- Bed wetting or thumb sucking;
- Persistent nightmares; and/or
- Headaches or other physical complaints.

The following will help your child:

- Talk with your child about his/her feelings about the disaster. Share your feelings, too.
- Talk about what happened. Give your child information he/she can understand.
- Reassure your child that you are safe and together. You may need to repeat this reassurance often.
- Hold and touch your child often.
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime.
- Allow your child to mourn or grieve over a lost toy, a lost blanket, a lost home.
- If you feel your child is having problems at school, talk to his/her teacher so you can work together to help your child.

Please reread this sheet from time to time in the coming months. Usually a child's emotional response to a disaster will not last long, but some problems may be present or recur for many months afterward. Your community mental health center is staffed by professionals skilled in talking with people experiencing disaster-related problems.

(Source: Association of California School Administrators)

When a Student Dies: Guidelines for Classroom Discussion

1. Review the facts and dispel rumors.
2. Share your own reactions with the class and encourage students to express their reactions in a way appropriate for them, noting that people react in many ways and that is okay.
Possible discussion: What was it like for you when you first heard the news?
3. Inform students of locations for grief support; reassure students that any adult in the building is available for support.
Possible discussion: How can you students help each other through this?
4. Listen to what students have to say. It is important not to shut off discussion.
5. Talk with students about their concerns regarding “what to say” to other bereaved students and the family of the deceased. If applicable, share information about the deceased’s culture (beliefs and ceremonies) which will help students understand and respond comfortably to the affected family.
Possible discussion question: If you were a member of (the student’s) family, what do you think you would want at a time like this?
6. If the student died of an illness and it is appropriate to do so, discuss the illness. This is especially useful for younger children who may need to differentiate between the illness of the child who died and any medical problems of others the child knows.
7. If a suicide occurs, discuss facts and myths about suicide.
8. Allow students to discuss other losses they have experienced. Help them understand this loss often brings up past losses; this is a normal occurrence.
9. Encourage students to discuss their feelings with their parents/families.

Keep in Mind —

- ! A “regular” day may be too hard for grieving students. Offer choices of activities.

When a Grieving Classmate Returns

First Words

- The classmate probably feels like he/she is from a different planet when returning to school.
- There is very little you can say wrong, so talk to the classmate.
- At least say, “hello,” “welcome back,” “I’m glad to see you,” or something similar.
- The brave might even say: “I missed you,” “I’m so sorry to hear about your _____’s death.”
- Even braver friends might even make statements like “It must be incredibly tough to have your _____ die.”
- Another option: write a brief note.
- If your classmate cries, that is okay; you did not cause the grief and you can’t make the person feel worse. Offer comfort and a tissue.

Helping the Classmate Adjust to the Class

- Offer to provide past notes.
- Offer to provide notes for comparison for the next week or so (your classmate’s attention span will probably vary for several weeks).
- Give the classmate your phone number to call if having problems with homework.
- Ask your classmate if you can call to check on how homework is going.
- Ask the teacher if you can be the student’s helper for a week.
- Offer to study together in person or over the phone; this might help with both motivation (grieving students frequently do not feel like doing school work) and with concentration.

Some Don’ts

- Don’t shun. Speak to the student.
- No cliché statements (e.g., “I know how you feel” when nobody knows the unique relationship the classmate had with the deceased).
- Don’t expect the person to snap back into the “old self.”
- Don’t be surprised if classmate seems unaffected by the loss, everybody has his/her own way of grieving.
- Don’t be afraid to ask appropriate questions about the deceased, like “what did you and your _____ enjoy together?” (people never tire of talking about the people they grieve).
- Just because the classmate may seem to be adjusting to school again, don’t assume the grieving has stopped, nor the need for comfort and friendship.

(Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools)

GUIDELINES/HANDOUTS FOR STUDENTS

Helping a Grieving Friend

First Steps

- If you learn of a grieving friend outside of school hours, call and go over as quickly as you can, if possible; or at least call.
- If you learn of a grieving friend during school, try to see the friend or send a note until you are able to talk.
- Your presence is all that is needed; if you wish to take a flower or anything meaningful, that's all right, too.
- Offer physical comfort
- Don't be afraid to cry with your friend.
- Do not try to take away the pain from your grieving friend.

Communication

- Talk about the deceased person (grieving people really like telling stories about the deceased, "Do you remember the time. . .").
- No cliché statements (e.g., "He's better off now since he now has no pain").
- Don't be afraid you will upset your friend by asking or talking about the deceased; they are already very upset and should be.
- Just sitting with your friend may be all that's needed at times; don't be afraid of silence, the griever will most likely fill it talking about the deceased.
- Offer suggestions only when advice is asked.
- Listen, no matter what the topic.
- Do not tell the griever to feel better since there are other loved ones still alive.
- Call to check on.

Attending a Visitation at the Funeral Home or Attending a Funeral

- If you have not ever been to a funeral home or a funeral, expect to feel nervous.
- Go with a friend or ask a parent to accompany you, if you wish.
- If this is the first time you've seen the grieving friend, simply offer your condolences; just saying "I am so sorry about _____'s death" will open a conversation, or simply point out something special to you about the deceased.
- If the visitation or funeral is open casket, view the physical remains if you want; you do not have to.

Later Involvement

- Ask your grieving friend to go places, do activities together (it's all right if he/she initially resists).
- If invitations are turned down, keep inviting.
- Call to check on and talk to.
- Continue to talk about the deceased from time to time.

(Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Helping Grieving Parents

This information should be helpful when interacting with the parents of a deceased friend. Always respect the wishes of grieving parents. These suggestions must fit the parents' needs and requests.

First Steps

- In the vast majority of cases the parents very much want to see the friends of their deceased child; they find it comforting.
- If you were a close friend of the deceased and you know the parents, the go visit them at their home.
- If you were a friend but had not met the parents (yet they know who you are), you might still visit the home.
- Other friends might wait until the visitation, such as held at a funeral home, or wait until the funeral.
- Regardless of the depth of your relationship with the parents, let them hear from you either by a call or a note.

Communication

- When you visit, do not worry about what to say; your presence is all that is needed. If you wish to take a flower or anything meaningful, that's all right, too.
- Don't be afraid you will upset the parents by asking or talking about the deceased; they are already upset.
- Don't be afraid to cry with the parents.
- Just sitting with the parents may be all that's needed at times; don't be afraid of silence, the parents will most likely fill the silence talking about their deceased child.
- Offer physical comfort.
- Listen, no matter what the topic.
- If you were a really close friend, the parents might be pleased for you to even visit the deceased friend's room.
- Ask what you can do for them; ask other relatives what you might do to help.
- Do not try to take away the pain from the grieving parents.
- No cliché statements (e.g., "he's better off now since he now has no pain").
- Talk about the deceased person (grieving people really like telling stories about the deceased, "do you remember the time...").
- Offer suggestions only when advice is asked.
- Do not tell the parents to feel better since there are other children and loved ones still alive.

Attending a Visitation at a Funeral Home or Attending a Funeral

- Expect to feel nervous when going to a funeral home or a funeral.
- Go with a friend or ask a parent to accompany you.
- If this is the first time you've seen the parents, simply offer your condolences; just say, "I am so sorry about _____'s death" probably will open a conversation; or maybe better, simply point out something special to you about the deceased.
- If the visitation or funeral is open casket, view the physical remains if you want; you do not have to.

Later Involvement

- After the funeral, continue to visit the parents; they probably will continue to want to see the friends of their deceased child.
- Call to check on and talk to.
- Continue to talk about their deceased child from time to time.

(Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools)

When Your Teacher Has Someone Die

Feelings

- Expect you and your classmates to experience different feelings, ranging from shock, sadness, vulnerability (“this could happen to me or someone I know”), to detach or nothing. All are okay.
- Some in your class may even laugh because they are nervous hearing or talking about grief and death. This may be their way of handling it, so don’t become angry.
- Don’t be surprised to catch yourself asking how this might affect you, your grades, or your relationship with your teacher.
- It’s okay to think about other people who have died.

What To Do

- Talk with somebody (a friend or parent) about what has happened. This helps make the situation seem more real and keeps you from holding everything in.
- Try to get the courage to communicate with your teacher.

Communicating With Your Grieving Teacher

- Your teacher probably has a lot to do and cannot take calls from students.
- Send a card (buy or make)
- Write a note (and you don’t have to have fancy stationery).
- Just write “I’m sorry” or “I’m thinking about you” or “I hope you are okay.”
- Others may write more, even share their own experiences with grief. One student even composed a poem!
- There is nothing you can say that could make your grieving teacher feel worse.
- You are not going to remind a grieving person that he/she has had somebody die.
- Your teacher may never throw your card/note away, that’s how important your communication will be. Your parents probably still have notes they’ve received.

Flowers and Donations

- They are not necessary.
- If you really want to do something, maybe you and some friends could pitch in together. Or maybe the class wants to do something as a group. It just takes one person to organize this.

What If You See Your Teacher Out in the Community

- If you see your teacher at the grocery store, a part of you will want to hide. How will that make your teacher feel?
- Speak to your teacher! You don't have to say much. "How are you doing?" or "We miss you at school" is enough.

What About Funerals and Memorial Services

- You have to respect the wishes of grieving people.
- Some teachers may welcome students. Others may not feel ready to cope with you yet. Some may feel uncomfortable with you around and their being "out of control." We have to understand and respect their needs.
- Also, 120- students take up a lot of space.
- Sometimes there is no chance to talk with the family. Other times you can't leave the building without doing so.
- If given the opportunity, speak. Again, just say "I'm sorry" or something brief. Have your first several words chosen to lessen your fear.

Visitation at a Funeral Home

- If students are invited, go but take someone with you.
- Unless you have lots of experiences with visitation, you are going to feel scared and weird.
- If you go, speak simply as described above.

(Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools)

When Your Grieving Teacher Returns

Getting Ready

- Plan some type of simple welcome back signal from the class to your grieving teacher. Consider:
 - a card signed by all the class;
 - a small banner from “second period”; or
 - some flowers from a parent’s yard, if in season; or a small, inexpensive bouquet
- If you have not communicated with your teacher, it’s not too late to have a note ready just from you. It could be waiting in the teacher’s mailbox on his/her return to school.
- Realize that the same teacher who left will return. Your teacher may initially seem a little distant or preoccupied but this should not last too long.
- Your teacher may have very poor concentration for a while after returning to work. He/she might repeat things. You may have to repeat your questions.
- Do not expect tests and homework to be returned as quickly as before; poor concentration, low motivation, and fatigue are typical grief reactions.

On the Big Day

- Expect to feel nervous. Your teacher will feel the same way.
- Your teacher also will probably feel like he/she is from a different planet.
- A part of you will say to sneak into the classroom without being seen. You might even justify these feelings by not wanting to upset your teacher. How would your teacher feel if no one spoke? How would you feel if you had been away from school for a while and no one spoke to you when you returned?
- When you first see your teacher, at least say something simple, like, “Welcome back.”
- The class also could even let a very brave volunteer speak for the class to formally welcome your teacher back. Or the volunteer could present the card.
- Show your good behavior; use your best listening skills. Help your teacher out; it will be a tough day. Smile!
- Some teachers will return quickly to teaching; others will discuss their grief. There is no single right way.

What If Your Teacher Cries?

- You do not have to anything but be patient.
- Your class could have a brave volunteer designated to offer comfort by saying something simple, such as, “We’re supporting you.”
- The student closest to the tissue box should take the box to the teacher. This shows the class cares and says it’s okay to cry.
- At the end of class students might individually offer brief words of comfort or encouragement (“it’s okay to get upset” or “I’m glad you are back”).
- Your teacher may be embarrassed by crying, but crying can be very helpful.
- If your teacher is having a really bad day, let your guidance counselor or other staff member know.

(Developed by Ken Roach, School Psychologist, Chesterfield County Public Schools)

Some Things That Can Be Helpful for Crisis Team Members and Other School Staff

- Take time to relax and do things you find pleasant. Getting away for a few hours with close friends can be helpful.
- Stick with your regular routine for a while; avoid making changes, even if it appears to be a positive change.
- Get regular exercise or participate in a regular sport; activity soothes anxiety and helps you relax.
- Keep your days as simple as possible; avoid taking on any additional responsibilities or new projects.
- Tap sources of assistance with your workload — have students, instructional assistants, or volunteers help grade papers, take care of copying, or help with other time-consuming tasks.
- If symptoms of stress persist beyond a few weeks or are severe, seek professional help.

APPENDIX E: RESOURCES

The resources listed below are intended to assist schools and communities in developing and enhancing school crisis and emergency management plans. The list is not exhaustive, nor is inclusion intended as an endorsement by the Virginia Department of Education.

FEDERAL RESOURCES

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)

<http://www.fema.gov>

U. S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS>

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

<http://www.ncjrs.org>

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

<http://www.usdoj.gov/cops>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

<http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS)

<http://www.samhsa.gov/cmhs/htm>

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)

<http://www.samhsa.gov/csap/index.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) - www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash

Division of Violence Prevention - www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm

National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

University of Colorado at Boulder, Campus Box 442
Boulder, CO 80309-0442
(303) 492-1032
www.colorado.edu/UCB/Research/cspv

Community Policing Consortium

1726 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
Publications - 1-800-421-6770
www.communitypolicing.org

National Association of Elementary School Principals

1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3483
(703) 684-3345
www.naesp.org

National Association of Secondary School Principals

1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-0200
www.nassp.org

National PTA

330 North Wabash Avenue
Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
1-800-4PTA
www.pta.org

National Law-Related Education Resource Center

www.abanet.org/publiced/nlr

National Safe Schools Resource Center

www.nwrel.org/safe/index.html

National Safety Council

<http://www.nsc.org>

National School Safety Center

www.nssc1.org

National Youth Gang Center

www.iir.com/nygc

Partnerships Against Violence Network (PAVNET)

www.pavnet.org

VIRGINIA RESOURCES

Center for School-Community Collaboration, Virginia Commonwealth University

<http://www.vcu.edu/eduweb/grants/csc.html>

Virginia Department of Education

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>

Virginia Department of Emergency Services

<http://www.vdes.state.va.us>

Virginia Effective Practices Project

<http://www.jmu.edu/cisat/vepp>

Virginia State Police

<http://www.vsp.state.va.us>

Virginia Youth Violence Project

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/curry/centers/youthvio/>

ONLINE DOCUMENTS

Annual Report on School Safety, 1998

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/AnnSchoolRept98>

Bullying Prevention Kit

<http://www.jmu.edu/cisat/vepp>

Combating Fear and Restoring Safety in Schools

<http://www.ncjrs.org/jjvict.htm>

Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings

<http://www.ncjrs.org/jjdp.htm>

Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/actguid/index.html>

Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html>

Manual to Combat Truancy

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Truancy>

Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising

<http://www.ncjrs.org>

Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kids

www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart

APPENDIX F: FORMS

The following forms are provided for you to photocopy, or edit and reprint, and use as needed.

DESIGNATION OF STAFF ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITY SITES

Assignment	Title/Name	Operations Site(s)
Decision Making/Control	1. Principal _____ 2. Ass't Principal _____	Main Office
Crisis Team	1. Coordinator _____ 2. Substitute Coord. _____	
Communications/Notification	1. _____ 2. _____	Main Office
Evacuation and Sheltering	1. _____ 2. _____	Main Gymnasium/Cafeteria
Student Accounting and Release	1. _____ 2. _____	Auditorium
Building Safety/Security	1. _____ 2. _____	Main Office/P.E. Office
Information (Telephone and "Walk-Ins")	1. _____ 2. _____	Library
Family Contact/Visitation	1. _____ 2. _____	Guidance Conference Room
Coordinate assistance for emergency/medical response	1. _____ 2. _____	Small Gymnasium
Support counseling for staff/students	1. _____ 2. _____	Guidance Offices; Career Library

STAFF WITH SKILLS IN MEDICAL CARE

Name	Room #	Training/certification
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

BI/MULTILINGUAL STAFF MEMBERS

Name	Room #	Language(s)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

STAFF MEMBERS WITH MOBILE/CELLULAR TELEPHONES

Name	Room #	Phone Number
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Student Emergency Release Form

I/We request that:

Student Name

Student Name

Student Name

be released to me/us

Print your name(s)

his/her/their

Relationship to student

Our intended destination is

Location, including address

Signature:

Telephone Number:

To be Completed by School Release Team

_____ Requester on emergency sheet – Student Released

_____ Requester NOT on emergency sheet but student released to him/her; the student knew the requester and felt comfortable being released to the requester. Parent had signed appropriate release space.

Time of Release: _____

Signature of Approval: _____

Date of Release: _____

(Source: Colonial Heights High School/Tech Center Emergency Plan)

COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL
Transportation List

METHOD OF TRANSPORT

- WALK
- RIDE (CAR)
- BUS (#)

STUDENT NAME	EMERGENCY CONTACT
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	
20.	
21.	

Bomb Threat Report Form

Make numerous copies and keep them at switchboard or main telephone for immediate use by operator/secretary.

Questions to Ask

1. When is bomb going to explode?
2. Where is it right now?
3. What does it look like?
4. What kind of bomb is it?
5. What will cause it to explode?
6. Did you place the bomb?
7. Why?
8. What is your address?
9. What is your name?

Exact wording of threat:

Time: _____ Date: ___ / ___ / ___

Sex of caller: _____ Culture: _____

Age: _____ Length of call: _____

Number at which call was received:

Caller's Voice

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Nasal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Stutter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excited | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slow | <input type="checkbox"/> Raspy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft | <input type="checkbox"/> Ragged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud | <input type="checkbox"/> Clearing Throat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep Breathing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying | <input type="checkbox"/> Cracking Voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Normal | <input type="checkbox"/> Disguised |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distinct | <input type="checkbox"/> Accent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred | <input type="checkbox"/> Familiar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whispered | |

If voice is familiar, who did it sound like?

Background Sounds

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Street | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Noises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PA System | <input type="checkbox"/> Static |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voices | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motor | <input type="checkbox"/> House Noises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Machinery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Booth | <input type="checkbox"/> Long Distance |

Threat Language

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foul | <input type="checkbox"/> Well spoken (educated) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taped | <input type="checkbox"/> Irrational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Message read by threat maker: | <input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent |

Remarks: _____

(Source: Chesterfield County Public Schools, Chesterfield, VA)

JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD/CENTRAL OFFICE/MANAGEMENT/TRANSPORTATION/PHONE NUMBERS

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	CELL PHONE #	PAGER #	HOME #	TITLE
					BOARD MEMBER
					ADMIN SECRETARY
					PUBLIC INFORMATION
					DIRECTOR FINANCE
					ADMIN SECRETARY
					COORDINATOR
					BOARD CHAIRMAN
					COORDINATOR/PERSONNEL
					COORDINATOR/PUPIL PERSONNEL
					COORDINATOR/TRANSPORTATION
					FACILITIES ASS'T/WHSE
					ASST. SUPERINTENDENT
					BOARD VICE-CHAIRMAN
					ASST. SUPERINTENDENT
					SECRETARY TO SUPT.
					BOARD MEMBER
					BOARD MEMBER
					BOARD MEMBER
					DIRECTOR/FACILITIES & PLAN
					SUPERINTENDENT
					BOARD MEMBER

(Source: Suffolk City Public Schools, Suffolk, VA)

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**COMMONWEALTH HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS TEAM
1999-2000**

Position/Name	Work Phone	Home Phone	Cell Phone/Beeper
Principal	_____	_____	_____
*Ass't Principal	_____	_____	_____
*Ass't Principal/ Team Coordinator	_____	_____	_____
*Guidance Director	_____	_____	_____
School Nurse	_____	_____	_____
School Resource Officer	_____	_____	_____
School Psychologist	_____	_____	_____
School Social Worker	_____	_____	_____
Secretary	_____	_____	_____
Teacher/Administrator/ Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Teacher/Administrator/ Counselor	_____	_____	_____
Custodian/ Maintenance	_____	_____	_____

* Designated back-up person(s) in the absence of the Principal and Team Coordinator

Staff Skills Inventory

(To be conducted annually)

Name _____ Room # _____

Please check any of the following in which you have expertise or training:

Emergency response:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First aid | <input type="checkbox"/> Search and Rescue | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CPR | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement Source | <input type="checkbox"/> CISD (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EMT | <input type="checkbox"/> CB Radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Ham Radio | _____ |
| | | _____ |

Mobile or Cellular Phone which could be used in an emergency

Phone number: _____

Bi/multilingual Language(s): _____

Survey of Students/staff Who Need Special Assistance in Evacuation

(To be conducted each semester)

Name	Grade/Location	Type of Assistance Needed
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

REQUIRED REPORT

Crisis Response Team Report to Superintendent

(Due within 5 days of incident)

School _____

Date of Report _____

Description of incident (include date, time, place):

Immediate actions by Crisis Response Team:

Describe assistance provided by Emergency Services:

Describe assistance provided by other community agencies/organizations:

Follow-up which has occurred/is occurring:

With students:

With faculty/staff:

With parent(s)/guardian(s) of student(s) involved:

With community:

Recommendations to improve responses to such crises in the future:

Principal Signature

Date

* Attach a list of students directly involved in the incident including their grade levels and parents' names, addresses, and phone numbers.

II. Please circle the adjectives which best describe the students' reactions to the CRT's intervention:

satisfied	positive
angry	negative
ambivalent	receptive
grateful	hostile
relieved	apathetic

III. Please describe any significant reactions the students had to the CRT intervention which should be considered in future interventions.

IV. Please comment on any aspects of the intervention you found particularly helpful or areas which you think should be modified.

School _____

Signature (optional) _____

Return to: Crisis Response Team Coordinator

(Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, VA)

Addendum - Part I

Terrorism

General Information

The terrorist attacks in September 2001 have brought to light the need for school crisis management plans to include strategies to protect students and staff in the event of subsequent attacks. Two key variables in responding to a terrorist attack are the nature of the terrorist threat and how much warning time there is available. In all cases of terrorist threat school officials should establish and maintain close communication with local public safety officials.

Types of Terrorist Attacks

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) categorizes terrorism in the United States as one of two types—domestic terrorism or international terrorism.

Domestic Terrorism: Involves groups or individuals whose terrorist activities are directed at elements of our government or population without foreign direction.

-
- The Department of Defense estimates that as many as 26 nations may possess chemical agents and/or weapons and an additional 12 may be seeking to develop them.

International Terrorism: Involves groups or individuals whose terrorist activities are foreign-based and/or directed by countries or groups outside the United States or whose activities transcend national boundaries.

- The Central Intelligence Agency reports that at least ten countries are believed to possess or be conducting research on biological agents for weaponization.
-

According to the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) likely to be used by terrorists fall into four categories: 1) conventional, 2) chemical, 3) biological, and 4) nuclear. Specific guidelines for schools have not yet been developed; however, some preliminary considerations are set forth below:

Conventional Weapons:

Conventional weapons include bombs and other explosive devices. The goal is to place students and staff in a protected space and / or to increase the distance from the blast area. Possibilities include

- Moving to basement rooms, if possible.
- Move to interior hallways, away from windows, closing doors to exterior rooms.
- Students/staff assume “duck and cover” position.
- Shut off gas utilities.
- If school buildings themselves be targeted, evacuation to other schools or community spaces such as community centers or churches should be considered.
- Release students to their parents / other authorized persons in accordance with emergency release procedures.

Chemical Weapons:

Chemical agents are poisonous gases, liquids or solids that have toxic effects on people, animals or plants. Most chemical agents cause serious injuries or death.

The goal is to limit exposure to contaminated air.

- In the absence of gas masks which are not available in sufficient quantity and present other practical problems, get all students into buildings, close all windows and doors, and shut off heat, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.
- Ground level spaces are preferable to basement areas because vapors may settle and become trapped in basements.
- Decisions to evacuate should be based on reliable information from public safety officials about the location of the chemical release and the direction and speed of winds carrying the agent toward or away from the school.
- If students are released to parents, procedures to minimize the penetration of airborne substances must be employed.

Biological Weapons:

Biological agents are organisms or toxins that have illness-producing effects on people, livestock and crops. They can be dispersed as aerosols or airborne particles.

Biological weapons present a particular challenge because symptoms may not present for days or weeks following exposure. Schools must rely on medical expertise in the development of procedures for responding to biological attack. Consider the following:

- If an attack is identified while it is occurring, schools should get students into buildings, close all doors and windows, and shut down HVAC systems. Just as with chemical weapons, the goal is to prevent or reduce exposure to the substance.
- Release students to their parents / other authorized persons in accordance with emergency release procedures.
- Because many biological weapons are contagious, school will likely be closed after an attack, pending clearance by medical authorities.

Nuclear Weapons

Just as with conventional weapons, the goal is to place students and staff in a protected space and / or to increase the distance from the blast area. Such weapons present a threat of not only blast effect but also exposure to radiation. Possibilities include

- Moving to basement rooms, if possible.

- Move to interior hallways, away from windows, closing doors to exterior rooms.
- Students/staff assume “duck and cover” position.
- Shut off gas utilities.
- Release students to their parents / other authorized persons in accordance with emergency release procedures.

Guidelines for Bio-Hazard Threats

Follow procedures established by your local emergency responders (fire departments, police, SEMA, HAZMAT, etc.) Implement the following procedures if any of your schools receive any kind of bio-hazard threat (including anthrax and chemical agents) or if your schools has a bio-hazard emergency.

- Should you receive such a threat or have an actual bio-hazard emergency, immediately call 911 or report the threat; call the appropriate contact person in your school district.
- The persons immediately exposed to the potential agent **MUST** remain where they are. They should try to avoid inhaling or touching the substance.
- Try to contain the substance in the package in which it came. Don't attempt to clean any spilled contents. Cover the spilled contents and the package or letter with anything handy—trash can, cardboard box, paper, etc.
- Proceed with lock-down procedures. Use a code and explain that information will be forthcoming. Try to dispel alarm and panic by keeping information basic. All staff/students should remain in their respective areas until notified otherwise.
- Do not evacuate students outside or send them home until the emergency responders have done their investigation.
- If it is necessary to move or evacuate students and staff to a different location, the HAZMAT team or other emergency responder will provide instructions to administrators as to how it will be done. If students and staff are moved/evacuated, remind staff to take their grade books, purses, and seating charts.
- Administration must inform the custodial/maintenance staff to shut down the heating and air handling units in the affected area.
- Keep the faculty, staff and students as informed as necessary. Work with emergency personnel who will provide the necessary and accurate information.
- Debrief students and staff after the incident.



Related Reading

Guide for All-Hazard, Emergency Operations Planning, State and Local Guide. Chapter 6 -- Terrorism. Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). (2001). Available online at www.fema.gov

Lessons Learned from September 11

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

To gain a better understanding of actions taken in response to September 11, the U.S. Department of Education has met with educators, students, teachers, administrators, law enforcement officials, medical experts and mental health professionals from around the country. These meetings were very productive, and the following items were determined to be critical elements to ensuring successful crisis management.

- We strongly urge schools to have a **plan for dealing with crisis**, including crises such as school shootings, suicides, and major accidents, as well as large-scale disasters, such as the events of September 11, that have significant impact on schools throughout the country. We recommend that every school review its school safety plan to ensure that it is comprehensive and addresses a wide range of crisis situations. Schools that do not have a school safety plan should implement a plan immediately. Some suggestions regarding issues that should be addressed in a school safety plan are included at the end of this document.
- Effective school safety plans are developed with **input from, and support of, a variety of public and private agencies**, including agencies representing law enforcement, fire departments, emergency services, victim services, and agencies responsible for homeland security. To be effective, school safety plans must communicate goals and assignments clearly and be updated regularly to remain relevant over time. Whether schools are reviewing existing plans or developing new ones, they should seek to include agencies with relevant expertise that may not have routinely partnered with schools.
- Developing a comprehensive school safety plan is only part of the task. Schools should **conduct practice drills** on a regular basis, and the results of practice activities should be reviewed to determine if revisions are needed. Practices can be incorporated within regularly scheduled safety activities, such as fire drills. Schools are encouraged to maintain contact with agencies that respond to crises, such as local law enforcement and fire departments, emergency preparedness agencies, and the National Guard, to ensure schools are included in any community-wide emergency preparedness drills.
- During a crisis, there is no guarantee that normal chains of communication, command, and control will work as intended. Communications between schools and central headquarters can be disrupted, delayed, or otherwise impeded during a crisis. School-level administrators cannot be certain that information, guidance, or orders will be available, and they must have the skills and confidence to respond to any crisis situation they might face. School administrators are encouraged to **consider several options for overcoming communication difficulties**. First, they may want to delegate decision-making authority to building-level principals during times of crisis. School district officials should work closely with law enforcement officials and other emergency service agencies in advance of a crisis situation to ensure that clear lines of authority are established and well known. Finally, we encourage officials to work with experts in the telecommunications field to understand what communication links are likely to be affected in certain circumstances, and explore back-up systems or plans, including “low-tech” or nontraditional communications strategies.
- Accurate and timely information on a crisis needs to be provided to students, family members, and faculty when appropriate. Absent such information, rumors and false information are likely to spread, which can cause additional problems for school and law enforcement officials. Therefore, school districts should develop a **detailed procedure for providing accurate and timely information** to students, parents, and faculty.
- School policies that address typical problems may not provide adequate guidance regarding some situations faced by schools in recent years. Policies need to be reviewed to make sure

they address a wide range of situations. We encourage school districts to **review policies related to the possession of cell phones, terror hoaxes, and assessment of threats** against schools, students, and faculty. We believe all threats made against students, faculty, and school property must be taken seriously and handled appropriately. We also encourage schools to work with parents, faculty and students to develop strategies for publicizing the serious consequences associated with making threats.

- **School safety plans must address issues beyond safety, and consider the health and mental health needs** of students, faculty, and parents that result from a crisis. Crises such as the ones experienced at Columbine and on September 11 affect students, faculty, and parents, to varying degrees, in every school district. When addressing health and mental health issues, school safety plans should recognize that some students, faculty, and parents might need these health-related services for long periods of time. We recommend that every school safety plan include a section that deals with recovery issues, including the health and mental health needs of students, faculty, and parents.
- Almost every community has access to the health and mental health services that can address the needs of those affected by crisis, but many school districts have not developed linkages with the organizations that can provide these services, and as a result, these services are not immediately available in time of crisis. We encourage school districts to **initiate conversations with local health and mental health providers and develop “memoranda of understanding” to delineate roles and responsibilities in times of crisis.**
- Schools experiencing major crises invariably receive an outpouring of support from potential volunteers who want to help. However, few districts have a plan in place to **screen volunteers** to make sure they are qualified and suitable to provide services in schools. We recommend that school safety plans include a process for screening persons who volunteer to assist during a crisis. Schools may want to consider having a cadre of experts and other service providers prescreened, so they can participate in emergency response activities without any delay.
- Only a few school districts have staff members who are adequately trained to deal with the results of a crisis such as a school shooting or the events of September 11. We encourage every district to **designate and train a person, or group, to act as lead official(s) for response to crisis situations.**
- Students are sometimes further traumatized by actions taken, often with the best intentions, by teachers, faculty, and parents. Constantly retelling or reshowing portrayals of violent events can have a traumatic effect on students. School districts are encouraged to work with mental health service providers, teachers, and parent groups to **establish guidelines for activities that respect the developmental capacity of students.**

Additions to Consider for School Safety Plans in Response to September 11

Schools need to develop comprehensive school safety plans that address the variety of crises they might face. While many schools and school districts have revised school plans to address shootings such as the tragedy at Columbine High School, the terrorist attacks in New York City and Virginia raise concerns that may not be addressed in current plans. The information below identifies specific concerns and suggests possible approaches to addressing them.

Evacuation: A major crisis may require several schools to be evacuated simultaneously. Because school plans frequently call for students to be evacuated to other schools in the district, alternate evacuation sites and routes should be identified. This will necessitate coordination of safety plans for individual schools with district-wide plans. Special plans are also necessary to address the threat or suspicion of bio-terrorism. In these situations, evacuation procedures must ensure that cross-contamination does not occur.

Attendance: In a major crisis, schools may need to quickly account for students. A plan for collecting and maintaining accurate attendance figures throughout the school day is necessary to provide data for this process. Schools should remember that attendance records should be stored in locations that are readily accessible to teachers, administrators, emergency service workers, and law enforcement officials.

Information for Parents: Parents expect schools to provide quick and accurate information regarding the location and status of their children. Schools should establish procedures for making such notifications and should regularly share those procedures with parents. A major crisis impacting an entire community may also require evacuation of parents or other caregivers from their homes or places of employment. As a result, school safety plans need to address alternatives for communicating with parents. This scenario also requires schools to examine procedures for releasing students to parents or other caregivers. If parents or other designated individuals cannot reach their students, or if students cannot be transported to their homes, schools should have a plan to respond appropriately.

Transportation: Alternate strategies for transporting students during evacuations and/or to their homes must be considered. During a large-scale crisis, usual methods for transporting students may not be available. Further, schools located in some sites such as military bases may be closed to the public, thus alternatives for transporting those students would be necessary.

Lead Official: Every school site should have one person designated “lead official,” who is well-trained, well-acquainted with all aspects of the school safety plan, and has the authority to take charge during a crisis. In addition to the lead official, schools should have a deputy or assistant lead official in case the lead official is not available in a time of crisis. Lead officials should meet regularly with law enforcement and other emergency responders to clearly define the roles and responsibilities for everyone involved.

Addendum - Part II

Communications

Communication is a critical part of crisis management. School staff members and students must be told what is happening and what to do. Parents of students and families of staff members must be informed about the situation, including the status of their child or family member. Timely contact with law enforcement and other emergency services is necessary for effective response. School Board members must be kept informed and updated information must be transmitted to central office and to other affected schools. The presentations must be informed and kept updated. Additionally, groups which are a part of the school community (PTA, advisory councils, etc.) and can assist with getting accurate information into the community are important. This chapter focuses on communication — within the school and school division, with parents and the community, and with the media.

Communications Basics

When a school crisis event occurs, the key communication tasks involve:

- notifying faculty and staff of known facts of the event and what first steps they are to take;
- keeping faculty and staff informed as additional information becomes available and response plans evolve;
- engage appropriate community resources to assist in restoring equilibrium and recovery;
- providing students with accurate information, countering rumors and mis-information;
- providing parents with accurate information about the event, the school's response, and suggestions and resources for appropriate response; and
- as appropriate, provide media with accurate information about the event and the school's response.

When a critical incident occurs, key communication tasks may become far more complex. First, key information should have already been assembled for use by emergency responders. See Section IV for a critical incident information inventory. In major crisis events a wide range of communications tasks must be undertaken. Crisis Communications Team tasks identified in the National Education Association Crisis Communications Guide and Toolkit are described below. Note that all the functions may be carried out by a single individual, particularly in smaller school divisions.

Crisis Communications Team Tasks

Spokesperson - Serves as the official source of all official school division information. This person addresses reporters at all scheduled press briefings; provides all official comments for press attribution; manages strategic message development; and counsels top administrators.

Media Coordinator - Manages media queries, including prioritizing requests according to deadlines, type of request, and whether or not it is from a local or national outlet. Local should get first priority as they are often part of the school community and will be covering the event long after the national media leave. This person identifies opportunities to promote the school message and anticipates the direction media queries will take so the district can prepare and respond.

Information-Communications Coordinator - Manages information flow. This person seeks out and organizes information updates, such as the time and place for community meetings, hotline phone numbers, instructions for donations, and press briefing schedules and channels it to internal and external audiences. Internal channels include district staff e-mail groups, listservers, blast faxes, and school voicemail. External channels include the media, parents, and the broader public. This person also develops and maintains the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document - a recording of questions fielded by phone bank volunteers and their answers. He or she also maintains the master schedule - a document containing all scheduled meetings and events for the day. The schedule is usually blown up to poster size and placed prominently for phone bank volunteers to reference. The information-communications coordinator also updates and compiles the daily fact sheet - a listing of all significant messages for the day and the source of information on a broad array of topics and provides sign off for distribution.

Media Monitor and Research Director - Monitors media coverage and seeks to correct inaccuracies. The media monitor provides summaries of coverage for all outlets for the spokesperson. The media monitor and research director is also responsible for maintaining research files.

Clerical and Systems Operations Coordinator - Oversees all distribution systems, including e-mail and fax for external and internal audiences. This person establishes a routine procedure for ensuring appropriate proofreading, signoff and quick delivery of information products. He or she is responsible for systems operation including programming fax machines, assigning and coordinating copy jobs, and distributing fact sheets to media and other external and internal audiences.

Liaison to Law Enforcement Agencies' Public Information Officers - Ensures that law enforcement representatives receive all communication products produced by the division office and attends briefings for updated information on anticipated press briefings and announcements. He or she provides regular updates and reports for spokespersons. The information obtained from law enforcement may influence school division communication and message development.

Liaison to Victims' Families and Counseling Units - Ensures that victims' advocates and victims' families receive all communication products from the school division communications office. He or she also obtains information on the concerns and needs of the victims and provides regular updates and reports to the spokesperson. The information obtained from the victims' liaison plays a major role in shaping the division's communication direction and message development.

Computer Systems, Web Page Technician - Oversees maintenance and operation of the communication operation's computer network; backs up files at the end of the day; and posts all new and approved communication products for the web page. He or she creates an avenue for answering e-mail queries and facilitates bulletin boards or chat rooms.

Volunteer Coordinator - Oversees all volunteer activity, including recruiting, training and scheduling volunteers to staff media query phone bank, coordinate special events, undertake writing projects, and act as a media escort. He or she prepares briefing folders for new volunteers, including daily fact sheets, key messages, telephone numbers, and web site addresses.

Liaison to Elected Officials and Manager of Special Events - Ensures that elected officials and community group leaders are informed of all division communication activity. Also coordinates elected officials' roles in memorial services, creating memorials, and other special events and provides a communication channel between elected leaders and district administration. This liaison is sensitive to the perceptions and reality of action that could potentially be considered political and advocates on behalf of school community needs.

Donations Coordinator - Implements systems to collect and distribute donations and works with the information coordinator to communicate needs and educate the public about how donations are being used. This is usually someone with business and political connections who can quickly marshal resources, such as storage space or equipment.



Related Reading

Crisis Communications Guide and Toolkit, National Education Association Washington, DC
Access at www.nea.org/crisis/

Challenges and Suggested Responses

<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>
Day One	

<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>
<p><u>Rumor Control</u> A common reaction to fear is to generate rumors or stories to fill in information that is not available. Making an uninformed declaration about information can be empowering for frightened individuals. Crises are fertile ground for rumors, and rumors are unfortunately self-perpetuating.</p>	<p>Clear and frequent communication. Crisis communicators should be involved, visible, and convey leadership. Survivors, victims' families, and local citizens will look to the school for leadership. Its presence will help calm fears and rumor mongering.</p>
<p><u>Phone Line Jams</u> Natural disasters and major newsmaking events can create massive phone traffic, jamming cellular connections.</p>	<p>Use combination two-way radio/cell phones and if possible keep one line open to the district office. If a connection is made, don't hang up, just put the phone down for use later.</p>
<p><u>Media Intrusion</u> School crises can create a crush of media, often making it hard to distinguish parents and students from journalists. Helicopters and cameras stationed outside the school provide live coverage that can put many lives at risk.</p>	<p>Determine and maintain a perimeter around the school that media may not cross. Ask for law enforcement help in policing violators. Violators may later be denied access to official school or law enforcement briefings.</p>
<p><u>Scattering of Schools and School Staff</u> Acting on instinct, staff and students facing danger flee the building, often not knowing where they are running. This makes it difficult to ensure that students are moving toward safety, not danger, and makes it difficult to account for students and staff. Parents who come to school often cannot find their children and panic ensues. Natural disasters can disperse children, families, and entire communities. Recent disasters have spawned effective people (and even pet) locator systems that often involve Internet communication.</p>	<p>Establish pre-identified locations (reunion areas) that students and staff should retreat to in the event of an emergency. Ensure that a procedure has been established for releasing students to parent or guarding care; the procedure should be able to account for when and into whose custody the child was released. Provide information about dispersed colleagues and students.</p>
<p><u>Media Mistakes</u> Fact verification. In the absence of information and the pressure of live coverage, verification of facts is often sacrificed for good pictures and sound.</p>	<p>Establish trust before the crisis strikes. Provide as much information as you can as quickly as you can without speculating or releasing unverified information. Even if all you can say are a few sketchy sentences, you can communicate your concern and compassion and the action being taken to investigate. Advise media of the potential destructiveness of being wrong.</p>
Day Two	
<p><u>Potential for Eroded Credibility</u> When bad things happen, past behavior is used to predict future actions. When past behaviors are considered good and helpful, the current and future behaviors don't match those expectations, there is a loss of credibility.</p>	<p>Implement trust-building, fear-reducing, credibility-fixing behaviors. Suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide advance information. ▪ Ask for input from all, even perceived opponents. ▪ Listen carefully. ▪ Demonstrate you've heard, adjust action. ▪ Stay in touch. ▪ Speak in plain language. ▪ Bring victims/involuntary participants into the decisionmaking process.
<p><u>Constant Need for Information</u> The need for a constant streaming of information to the community is enormous. Questions and anxieties can escalate.</p>	<p>Organize separate all-school staff and all-community meetings to provide information and opportunity to express concerns. Immediately implement</p>

<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>
	information channels that are accessible to all members of the community and media -- an interactive web site for questions and answers, a crisis response hotline, and a regularly updated fact sheet.
<u>Panic and Alienation</u> Normal routines and support systems are suspended and survivors can feel very alone and panicked.	Drop-in centers should be made available in several locations throughout the community for parents, students, teachers and others to receive information, counseling, and contact with other grieving members of the school and community.
<u>Media Feeding Frenzies</u> Reporters are scrambling for pictures of students, interviews with school staff and students, and sometimes implement specious means of gaining access to schools and hospitals.	Implement a system for coordinating and responding to media and set parameters for coverage.
Day Three and Beyond	
<u>Community Feelings - Bitterness and Blame</u> Victims and victims' families and the school community may feel bitter and may take action that causes divisiveness. There may also be a tendency to place blame or emphasize simplistic solutions to violence or community crisis.	Care must be taken to sustain open, responsive communication lines with all facets of the school community, particularly the victims and their families. Liaisons to victims should make frequent contact with the families and be responsive to their concerns and needs. In addition, affirming community-wide activities should be scheduled to allow citizens to contribute to memorials and expressions of compassion.
<u>Victims' Feelings - Anxiety, Frustration, Anger</u> Victims (of varying degrees) declare their needs are not being met or considered and resist solutions.	Promote the understanding that victims have a special mentality and their perception and behavior is altered in ways that are fundamentally predictable. Victims designate themselves and determine when they are not longer victims.
<u>Anxiety and Media Interest in Return to School</u> Anxieties escalate around returning to school. There is a heightened media interest in covering the first day back.	Establish drop-in support groups within school during lunch hour and before and after school. Carefully plan re-entry and make adequate counseling support available. Communicate well first day plans and set limits with the media.

Adapted from National Education Association Crisis Communications Guide and Toolkit. Access at www.nea.org/crisis

School Communications

When a school crisis has occurred notifying faculty and staff of an event or crisis and keeping them informed as additional information becomes available and as plans for management of the situation evolve is critical. Some practices which school administrators have found to be helpful include the following:

The Telephone Tree

A telephone tree is a simple, widely used system for notifying staff of a crisis event when they are not at school. A very carefully crafted statement, specifying what is and is not yet known, should be drafted before the telephone tree is activated.

The Morning Faculty Meeting

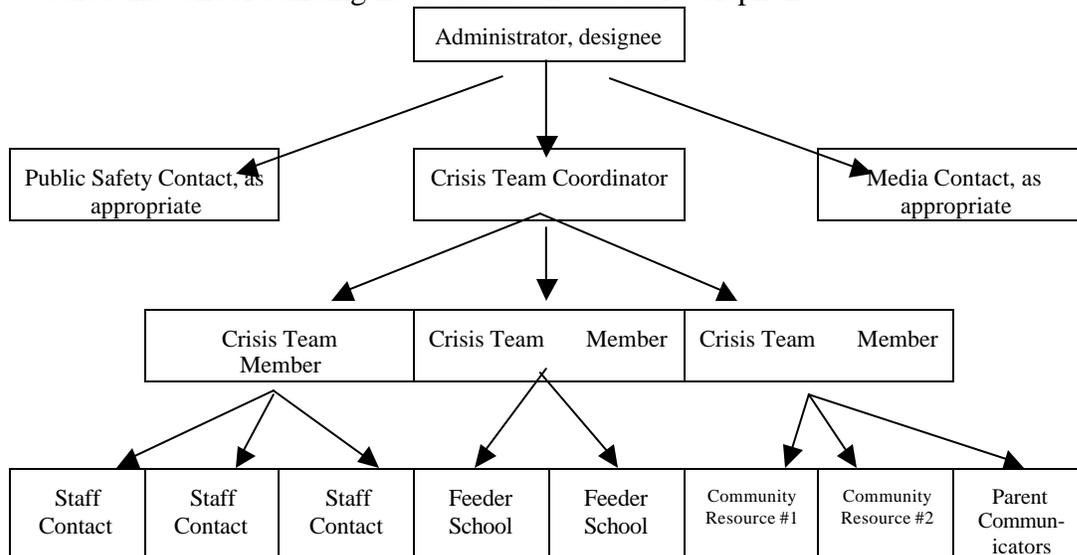
An early, brief faculty meeting provides the opportunity to give accurate, updated information about the crisis event/situation itself and to review with staff procedures for the day, including the availability of intervention resources.

The End-of-Day One Faculty Meeting

A brief end-of-day one meeting provides the opportunity to review day one, update information, and plan for day two. Misinformation or rumors can be addressed before staff members go home or into the community where they are likely to be asked about the situation.

Simple Telephone Tree

Once it is verified that a crisis exists, the building administrator or designee sets the phone tree in motion. When a crisis occurs during weekends, vacation periods, or when a large number of staff is away from school, it will be necessary to transmit information via a phone tree. At other times, when crises occur when school is in session, only the people outside the school building need to be contacted via telephone.



The crisis response telephone tree should include all staff -- including cooks, bus drivers, custodians, and other support staff -- and should be reviewed each year with all staff.

Making the Calls

- Begin with a statement such as, "I'm sorry to have to call with bad news. . ." or "due to the impending storm . . ."
- Ask the person to get paper and pencil to write specifics if they will be calling another person.
- Give facts about the event, identifying critical information needs: what happened, who is okay and who is hurt; action to be taken to respond, and how to help and get help.
- Notify them of upcoming all-staff meeting and note that further details will be available at the meeting.
- Remind them not to speculate in their phone tree calls -- that they should just pass on essential information.

Dealing with Rumors

Establishing reliable communications networks is critical for dealing effectively with a potentially detrimental phenomenon always present in crises: rumors. People are going to talk about an emergency and, when accurate information is not available, rumors begin. Without facts, people begin to speculate and the speculations soon come to be thought of as “facts.” Left unchecked, rumors can become more difficult to deal with than the crisis event. They may create a negative perception of the school’s ability to manage an emergency or, even worse, a belief that the school cannot provide for the safety and well-being of the children. The most effective strategy for combating rumors is to provide facts as soon as possible. Some strategies which may be helpful include the following:

1. Identify and notify internal groups including administrators, teachers, students, custodians, secretaries, teaching assistants, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers. These people are primary sources of information and are likely to be contacted in their neighborhoods, at grocery stores, etc. It is critical that they have accurate information because what they know (or don’t know and are speculating about) will be passed on. A faculty/staff meeting should be held before staff members are allowed to go home so that what is (and is not) known can be clearly communicated.
2. Clerical staff who answer the telephone at the school and at the central office must know which information can be shared and which information cannot be shared. They must be kept informed of inaccurate information which is circulating so they can help “correct” misinformation. Designating a few persons to answer calls helps control the circulating of misinformation.
3. Use of key communicators in the community will also combat rumors. A telephone tree or a briefing held especially for identified community representatives directly associated with the school will help spread accurate information.
4. The media can also help control rumors; ask them to provide frequent updates to the public, particularly providing accurate information where rumors need to be dispelled.
5. After the immediately crisis has passed, public meetings may be helpful. It provides an opportunity for people to ask questions and to receive accurate information. A follow-up public meeting may also be helpful in restoring the community’s confidence in the school’s ability to manage crises and to provide a safe environment.

Using Technology for Communication

Technology can be a very effective tool for communication during a crisis. Some common tools that may be used include the following:

Telephone. Although the telephone is the most commonly used communications tool in schools, most schools do not have enough lines and, worse, service is typically lost when electricity is lost. In preparing for crises it is recommended that:

- Schools should have at least one secure line with an unpublished number.
- The telephone company should be consulted in pre-planning; there may be unused lines in the school's control panel which can be activated if needed.
- Use standard jacks and mark them clearly so emergency service personnel can find them. The school floor plan which is part of the school's "emergency toolkit" should have the location of jacks marked clearly.

Intercom systems. Most schools have such a system; systems which include teacher-initiated communications with the office and use a handset rather than a wall-mounted speaker are most useful in an emergency. Instructions for use of the intercom system should be posted near the controls in the office area. Additionally, students should be taught to use the intercom system – the teacher may have a medical emergency or be otherwise unable to operate the system

Bullhorns and megaphones. Often used at pep rallies and field days, battery-powered bullhorns or megaphones can also be very effective tools for communication in an emergency and should be a part of the school's "emergency toolbox." Procedures governing storage of the bullhorn in the office closet in the gym may not be an option. If one is not available (or out of batteries!) at the school, law enforcement vehicles are sometimes equipped with speakers **B** another good reason to include law enforcement in the pre-planning process.

Two-Way Radios. Routinely used in many schools, two-way radios provide a reliable method of communication between rooms and buildings at a single site. There are combination radio/cell phone units now available. All staff need to know how to operate the walkie-talkie (even those who don't routinely carry them).

Computer telecommunications. A relatively new tool, the potential capability of existing computers to be used for communication both within the school and to other sites needs to be assessed as part of the pre-planning process. E-mail or electronic bulletin boards may be a useful tool for updating information for staff, central office, other schools in the affected area, and possibly for other community agencies.

Web Pages. The Internet can be a powerful tool for sharing facts and information. From posting daily fact sheets to putting up lists of contact and support numbers to giving survivors a place to post their thoughts and feelings, a web page can be a critical part of the school's information dissemination and support functions.

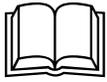
Fax machines. The fax machine is a potentially valuable tool for both sending and receiving information in an emergency. In the case of off-campus accidents, for example,

lists of students and staff members involved, their locations, and needed telephone numbers can be quickly and accurately communicated. Medical information, release forms, and medical authorizations can be faxed, signed, and returned in emergencies.

Cellular telephones. Increasingly available and affordable, the role of cellular telephones as a communications tool needs to be carefully assessed. They may be the only tool working when electric service is out and are particularly useful as a link to staff members who may be en route to or from the site of an accident or other emergency. They are increasingly being used to link the multiple vehicles transporting students and staff on off-campus trips.

“Panic buttons.” Some schools have installed “panic buttons” connected directly to the police or other emergency services. In some communities, there is an immediate response; in others, the police or fire department call the school to confirm the emergency.

Alarm systems - Bells or buzzers may be sounded in different ways to signal different types of emergencies, for example, fire, tornado, or special alert (with instructions to follow).



Related Reading

[The Appropriate and Effective Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools.](http://www.ncjrs.org/school/178265.pdf) National Institute of Justice, 1999. Access at www.ncjrs.org/school/178265.pdf

SAMPLE SCHOOL COMMUNICATION: INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF A CRISIS EVENT

Source: Association of California School Administrators, 1995

TO:
FROM:

“We have just been advised of a tragedy involving a member(s) of our school. I am sad to announce that _____ has died/has been in a serious accident. As soon as we have more information, we will pass it on to you. People will be available in the building to help those of you who need extra support in dealing with this situation. Your teachers will advise you of the location and times available for this support.

“As soon as we know the family’s/families’ wishes regarding _____ we will share that information with you. We ask that all students remain in their classrooms and adhere to their regular schedules.”

SAMPLE SCHOOL COMMUNICATION: ANNOUNCEMENT OF A STUDENT SUICIDE

To be read to the students by the classroom teacher.

TO: School Faculty
FROM: Principal
SUBJECT: (Crisis)
DATE:

John Doe committed suicide early Saturday morning. As a faculty we extend our sympathy to John’s family and friends.

We encourage all students to consider the tragic nature of this death and to realize that death is final. John’s death is a reminder to us all that the act of taking one’s life is not an appropriate solution to any of life’s problems nor is it an act of courage. Please let your teachers know if you would like to talk to a counselor or other staff member.

Funeral services for John will be held in _____ and there will not be a memorial service in this area. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to (name and address).

Communications with Parents and the Community At Large

A very important aspect of managing crises is dealing effectively with parent reactions. *Communication with parents and the community is best begun before a crisis occurs.* Some useful strategies include the following:

1. Educate parents about the school crisis plan, its objectives, and the need for it. Such information can be included in the school handout or other informational materials prepared for parents, at parent orientations, or at other informational meetings.
2. Develop a relationship with parents so that they trust and feel comfortable calling school personnel in the event of crisis.

Develop materials that may be needed including:

- Draft formats of letters to parents informing them of what happened, how the school and school division are handling the situation, and information on possible reactions of their child and suggested ways to talk with them.
- Develop a list of community resources that may be helpful to parents.
- Identify parents who are willing to volunteer in case of an emergency, include them in preparation efforts, and include them in training.

Parent Information Needs

In the event of an emergency parents have very specific information needs.

First, parents want to know their child is safe; then, parents want to know the details of the emergency situation, to know how it was handled, and to know that their children will be safe in the future. The first reactions are likely to involve fear. Upon learning of an incident at the school, parents are likely to descend upon the school in search of their child or to telephone, frantically seeking information. Establishing a system for responding quickly to parent needs for information is an important part of pre-planning. Anger is another common reaction of parents, particularly in the case of senseless acts of violence. In the event of a crisis or disaster:

1. Tell parents exactly what is known to have happened. Do not embellish or speculate.
2. Implement the plan to manage phone calls and parents who arrive at school.
3. Schedule and attend an open question-and-answer meeting for parents as soon after the incident as possible. The meeting is an opportunity for school officials to listen and respond to parent concerns (which is helpful in combating rumors and

other misinformation) and to work on restoring parental trust in the school. In the event of an incident which involved damage or destruction, an open house for parents and other members of the community to see the school restored to its “normal” state helps everyone get beyond the crisis.

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR PARENT COMMUNICATION RE: EMERGENCY PICK-UP

Parent Procedures for Picking up Children in an Emergency

In a letter or as part of the school parent handbook, the school should inform parents, in writing, about the proper procedures to follow in picking up a child/children in an emergency situation requiring a shut-down or evacuation of the school. It is assumed that bus transportation will be provided; however, many parents will want to pick up their children and the provisions listed below apply to such situations.

Among the types of information that might be contained in the letter are:

- Emphasize that school is one of the safest places that students may be located during most crises or natural disasters.
- Assurance that emergency procedures have been established. Include a general description of the procedures.
- Assurance that students will be kept at school until the crisis is determined to be over. For example, a chemical spill may delay student release when there is risk of exposure.
- Notification that under certain circumstances students may be evacuated to another site. An explanation of how parents will be notified or ways that they will be able to find out where their child is.
- A request to NOT telephone the school and tie-up the few telephone lines that will be needed for emergency use. (Where capabilities exist, status reports might be posted on the school or school division website).
- Notification that students will be released to parents who come to get them and a reminder of procedures for release to other authorized parties.

SAMPLE PARENT COMMUNICATION: STUDENT DEATH

Unexpected student death – elementary

(adapted from letter developed by Chesapeake City Public Schools, Virginia)

Dear Parents,

Yesterday, we learned that one of our first graders, _____, died while in the hospital. _____ had his tonsils removed over the past weekend. Complications set in after his parents took him home and he was taken back to the hospital where he died yesterday afternoon.

Today, at school, each teacher read a short message about _____ to his/her class. We discussed what happened and how _____ died. We also stressed that many people have their tonsils out every day and have no problems with it. Our guidance counselor and our school psychologist were available throughout the day to talk with any student that may have had a particularly difficult time dealing with the news.

Any death is difficult for children to understand. _____'s death is particularly difficult due to his young age and its unexpectedness. The fact that _____ died while at the hospital and the fact that it was related to having his tonsils out may also be frightening for children, especially those who may need to have their own tonsils out in the future.

We recommend that you take some time to discuss _____'s death with your child. We suggest allowing your child to talk about how he/she feels and any fears or concerns he/she may have as a result of hearing this news. We are enclosing a list of suggestions to help you talk with your child about _____'s death and/or the death of any loved one.

If you feel that your child would benefit from talking with our guidance counselor or our school psychologist, please call us at the school and share your concerns.

The faculty, staff and students extend our heartfelt sympathies to the _____ family and to all their friends. We at the school will miss _____ very much. He was our friend and we loved him.

Sincerely,
School Principal

SAMPLE PARENT COMMUNICATION: BUS ACCIDENT

Bus Accident

(adapted from letters developed by Chesapeake City and Hanover County Public Schools, Virginia)

Dear Parents,

This morning, prior to school, there was an accident involving a school bus and an automobile. There were known injuries to the passengers of the car. The children on Bus # _____ witnessed the aftermath of the accident, but were not involved in it.

The children from the bus involved in the accident were taken to the library by the guidance counselors and administration. The children were asked if they were injured in any way and their parents were then contacted. Your child, because of being on Bus # _____ may show delayed reaction to the accident. Please be alert over the next several days to symptoms of delayed reaction, including:

- a desire to be alone, unusually quiet
- loss of appetite
- problems with sleeping, nightmares
- difficulty with concentration
- crying
- angry outburst, short temper
- headaches, upset stomach

Your child may also exhibit some physical complaints. Please contact (principal's name) to fill out an accident report. The school will be offered support services for students needing help dealing with the accident. We will also provide counseling services to parents in helping their children to cope. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns. (Give school phone number.)

Sincerely,

Principal of School

SAMPLE NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS REGARDING SCHOOL EVACUATION

Date Released:

Time Released:

Released by:

Because of the incident at (School Name Here), the students, faculty and staff have been evacuated to an alternate location as a preliminary measure.

(School Name Here) has been relocated to (New Location Name Here).

(Repeat this information for as many schools as may be involved.)

Parents are instructed to pick up their children at the alternate location. Do not attempt to pick up children at their regular school. Please meet your child at the alternate location. All other schools and school facilities are unaffected. Parents and citizens are urged not to interfere in the operation of those schools by calling on the telephone or by personal visits. Your cooperation in this matter is expected and appreciated.

(Repeat this message once, then follow with any other official message.)

Communications with Media

General Guidelines

Media policy varies from one school system to another. Contact is generally channeled through one person. Most news people are sensitive, open to suggestions and interested in doing a reputable job. When dealing with the media, the following suggestions will promote clear communications:

- Deal up-front with reporters. Be honest, forthright and establish good communication with the media before problems or a crisis occurs.
- Do not try to stonewall the media or keep them from doing their job.
- The school should decide what to say, define the ground rules, issue a statement and answer questions within the limits of confidentiality.
- Identify a single information source.
- Advise school staff of media procedures.
- Advise students of the media policy. Let them know that they do not have to talk, that they can say no.
- If the crisis is a death, consult with the deceased student/staff member's family before making any statement. Explain school system policy and assure them that confidential information is being protected.

During A Crisis:

- Attempt to define the type and extent of the crisis as soon as possible.
- Inform employees what is happening as soon as possible.
- Designate that a central source, such as the crisis communications center, coordinate information gathering and dissemination.
- Instruct all employees to refer all information and questions to communications centers.
- Remind employees that only designated spokesmen are authorized to talk with news media.
- Take initiative with news media and let them know what is or is not known about the situation.

- When communicating, remember to maintain a unified position and uniform message; keep messages concise, clear, and consistent; keep spokesman and alternates briefed.
- Contact the top administrator or designee to inform him of the current situation, emerging developments, and to clear statements.
- Delay releasing information until facts are verified and the school's position about the crisis is clear.
- Read all releases from previously prepared and approved statements to avoid danger of ad-libbing.
- Assign sufficient staff to handle phones and seek additional information.
- Keep a log of all incoming and outgoing calls and personal contacts.
- Relieve key people from their normal duties so they may focus on the crisis.
- Express appreciation to all persons who helped handle the crisis.
- Prepare a general announcement to be given by the principal or designee. A straightforward sympathetic announcement of loss with a simple statement of condolence is recommended. Also, a statement that more information will be forthcoming, when verified, can be reassuring to students and staff.

Communicating with the Media in Times of Crisis

1. The primary goal should be to keep the public informed about the crisis while trying to maintain the privacy of students and ensure as little interruption of the educational process as possible.
2. As soon as possible, prepare a written statement that gives the basic facts clearly and concisely or ask the division Community Relations Director to prepare one for you. Two or three minutes spent writing down some specific points is valuable. If there is time, try to anticipate what some of the questions will be and prepare answers. News people will always want to know: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Try them out on your colleagues and see if they have any recurring questions. Use the same facts in dealing with all media so the story is consistent.
3. If news media personnel arrive on campus while students are in class, guide their activities so they will not disrupt the educational process. The news media can come onto the campus but should not be permitted to enter classrooms.
4. Don't presume to tell a reporter what is or isn't newsworthy. That decision is made by the reporters and their editors. And never -- absolutely never -- lie to a reporter. Tell the bad news quickly; get it over with. It may be your only chance to set the record

straight. It's vital to establish our division as the best source for information on the crisis. If the media think you're hiding something, they're likely to dig hard for information from other sources and play the story more sensationally -- and perhaps less accurately. Protecting and enhancing the division's credibility is important.

5. Talk conversationally, or you will inadvertently pitch your voice up and sound strained. If you don't understand the question, say so. Parroting the reporter's question is very dangerous on radio or video tape because the tape can be edited to sound like you concur whether you do or not. Suppose the reporter asks, "How are you handling this terrible shock?" Don't respond, "We are handling this terrible shock by . . ." Instead, respond in your own words to the effect that, "The students are continuing their usual schedules, following a morning assembly where we discussed the situation."
6. Answer each question and then be silent. Stick with the statement. Don't embellish it and don't respond to media pressure to chat about it. Just because a TV reporter sticks a microphone in your face or a radio reporter lets the tape run does not mean you have to fill that prolonged silence. Don't worry. . . your pauses will be removed in the editing process. If you are standing for the interview, don't back up, even through the microphone seems to be put down your throat. Plant your feet firmly and stand your ground. Suggest that everyone sit down if you need "space."
7. Remember that conflict is news, and reporters often frame their questions to bring out the conflict or emotion in a story. Guard your students against such intrusions if grief is involved in the response. (However, if the media wants student or community viewpoint, it may be well to arrange for them to talk to your PTA president.)
8. If a reporter asks several questions at once, say something like, "You've asked me several questions here. . . where would you like me to begin?" If a reporter interrupts you before you've finished answering your question, pause, let the reporter finish, and then continue your answer. Don't let the reporter get you off track or tell you when you've finished your answer. However, don't go into lengthily detail or run off with the interview either.
9. Don't let a reporter's friendly, sympathetic manner disarm you into giving him/her additional information. Don't assume any chatty comments "are off the record" even if you say they are. Keep in mind that the media aren't in business to help you with your communication needs: the media are in business to (1) make money and (2) disseminate news. "News" can be defined as any information of interest to the public.
10. Reporters are under constant deadlines, but no deadline is so important that it's worth making an inaccurate statement. If a reporter says he/she has deadline problems, ask how long you have to get the information, and then try to obtain it within that amount of time. Don't put reporters off; they will only get more insistent and abrasive if you do so.
11. It is best not to answer a query with "No comment." Otherwise, the reporters may report you wouldn't answer questions or may interpret for themselves why you aren't answering. Instead, say, "I can't share that information with you right now, but I will

call you as soon as I can release it. (And do call them). Or say, "I don't know the answer, but I should have it in an hour. Please call me. If you can't reveal information at all, tell the reporters why. Examples: Relatives of an injured student haven't been notified yet or revealing the identity of a witness would jeopardize an investigation.

12. After you provide the written statement to the media or answer subsequent questions, keep a media log of whom you speak to and what you give them, whether it is the basic statement or a subsequent update. This allows you to track which medium received what information.
13. Don't ask a reporter for editing rights or to see the story for approval before it runs. Most news media have specific policies preventing this. Reporters may well interpret these requests as insults or a slight on their competence. Don't complain to the media if you feel you were treated unfairly. You may simply draw more attention to the crisis. If major story details are inaccurate in a newspaper story, you can ask for a correction. But getting a similar correction in a TV or radio story is more difficult and must involve a giant inaccuracy.
14. The Community Relations Department should be updated on any emergency. The Community Relations Department will assist district or building administration in handling interviews with news media and coordinate the flow of information.

Media DOs and DON'Ts

Do:

- Emphasize your good record.
- Be accurate and cooperate as best you can.
- Be prepared for and prepare in advance a response to questions which might violate confidentiality or hinder the police investigation.
- Insist that reporters respect the privacy rights of your students and staff.
- Speak to reporters in plain English -- not educationese.
- When asked a question and you don't know the answer, say so, then offer to find out and call the reporter back.

Don't:

- Don't try to keep the media out or "kill" a story.
- Don't say "no comment."
- Don't ad-lib.
- Don't speak "off the record."
- Don't speculate.
- Don't try to cover-up or blame anyone for anything.
- Don't repeat negative/misleading words.
- Don't play favorites among media.

How a Disaster Unfolds: An Overview

Although each crisis is unique, there often is a common pattern to the media's response in the aftermath of any tragedy that affects whole communities. The type of information sought by the media as the trauma unfolds often follows the following pattern.

0 - 12 hours: In the immediate aftermath of a community crisis the media is scrambling to get information to answer the question _ What happened? The media attempts to piece together a story, based on eye-witness accounts, monitoring police radios, and, in many cases, grabbing anyone to talk about what happened. This results in incomplete, conflicting and inaccurate accounts of what actually happened. In the worst case scenario, the media has monitored the police radio frequency and arrives at the scene of the crisis before the police or rescue workers, thus obtaining unrestricted access to the crime or disaster scene.

12 - 24 hours: As the crisis unfolds, the next question the media seeks an answer to is Who? Who are the victims? There is often a struggle over the timing of the release of the names of injured and killed victims as the authorities try to notify the surviving family members. No one is immune from the media's search for identifying information about the victim. The media will seek this information from a variety of sources, including hospitals, the police, rescue workers, families, neighbors, schools, passenger lists, co-workers -- or through encampments at the crisis scene -- all in an effort to identify who has information about the crisis and its victims.

24 - 36 hours: The next question the media tries to answer is the question of Why? Why did this tragedy happen? It is a normal reaction on the part of many people, including victims, survivors and community members, to try to understand what happened by finding someone or something to blame. Everyone has their own version of who is to blame and the media feeds into this hysteria by speculating on who or what may have caused the crisis well before the actual facts of the situation emerge. In cases of criminal acts of violence, where the obvious person to blame is identified suspect, the media will run stories laying blame on a variety of sources such as lax security, questioning whether the victim in some way contributed, or about those who could have foreseen or prevented this tragic crime. In crises involving natural disasters, where there is no offender to blame, issues of faulty construction, inadequate disaster preparedness capability, or why the victims did not carry adequate insurance coverage often arise.

36 - 72 hours: At this point during a community crisis the media continues to speculate on what happened and why, and in addition, often begins to evaluate the rescue efforts as to whether they were effective and timely. Often, this occurs even as the rescue or cleanup operations continue. Ensuring privacy for victims as they are released from the hospital, return to work, or begin to make arrangements for funerals or memorial services is critical at this time.

72 hours - Forward: The details of what happened at the crisis site is now old news, and the news story that is current concerns the funeral services of the deceased. In addition, the crisis story is now old news. In order to continue coverage, the media often tries to put a "spin" on a story to keep it in the news. The media looks for twists, or a new angle by which to present the same information. Issues concerning the lifestyle, social and religious pursuits of the victim, stories about victims who have suffered through similar misfortunes as well as any previous doubts about the employer, business, government agency or whoever is currently being blamed for contributing to the crisis, now all surface.

Source: National Organization for Victim Assistance

Victims Need to Know . . .

Even in a crisis situation, let victims know about their specific rights with respect to the media. Provide victims with the suggested media code of ethics which is published at the end of this chapter. Let victims know the following:

1. They do not have to talk to, pose for pictures or provide photographs to the media;
2. They can choose the time and the place for an interview -- it does not have to be immediate or at the media's convenience;
3. They can refuse to answer a question even if they already agreed to discuss the topic;
4. Let victims know that they have the right to ask to review a story before it goes to press or on the news although most media during a crisis situation operate on too tight a deadline for this.
5. In addition, quickly teach victims the difference between:
 - a. "on the record" -- when everything they say is subject to publication;
 - b. "off the record" -- when nothing they say should be subject to publication, although unscrupulous reporters may publish it with impunity; or
 - c. "for background only" -- where the information may be used without attribution to the victim.
6. Emphasize that victims should make sure which rules they are being interviewed under prior to answering any questions.
 - a. techniques to shield their faces with coats, arms or whatever it takes to prevent the media from filming them;
 - b. an understanding that no reporter is your friend when she or he is after a story.

Setting Limits with Media

In a school crisis, media should NOT --

- Be in the school building itself, particularly roaming the halls and/or the scene of a critical incident.
- Film deceased or injured students or staff.
- Film the family members of deceased or injured students or staff.
- Release the names of victims or perpetrators until after family notification.
- Obtain photographs of victims without explicit family permission.
- Intimidate students or staff with intrusive questions about the facts of the incident or their feelings about the event.
- Attend post-incident meetings intended to assist the school / community recover from trauma.

Strategies for Setting Limits

- Limit access to the school campus. Do not hesitate to use security personnel or, if necessary, the police.
- Direct media to an alternate location away from the school where media briefings and press conferences can be held.
- Deny admission to the press conference to any reporter who violates limits.
- Make sure teachers and parents emphasize with students that they are not required to talk with the media and assist them in preparing statements such as "Do not take my picture," "I have nothing to say," or "Please leave me alone."
- Do not permit media to attend any family or community meetings held after the event.